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ABSTRACT

A discussion of family literacy projects focuses on alternatives to traditional methods of program evaluation. In the first chapter, the distinction between standardized and alternative assessments is clarified and the special evaluation needs of family literacy projects are highlighted. The remainder of the handbook is intended to help program staff members design and implement appropriate alternative approaches to assessment. Each chapter addresses a different aspect of assessment and evaluation. Chapter 2 contains a model for integrating program planning, implementation, and evaluation activities. Chapter 3 addresses initial assessment, including needs assessment, intake, and placement, suggesting strategies for using these to yield accurate baseline information. The fourth chapter describes how alternative approaches can be used to document learners' progress toward instructional objectives, and the fifth chapter suggests uses for surveys, performance samples, focus groups, and observation techniques to measure and demonstrate progress toward program goals. The final chapter describes the process used in designing and field testing this handbook, using the planning model presented earlier and offering methods for refining the project in question. A glossary is included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

ED 375 688

Assessing Success

IN FAMILY LITERACY PROJECTS

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ASSESSING SUCCESS in FAMILY LITERACY PROJECTS

Alternative Approaches to Assessment & Evaluation

EDITED BY
DANIEL D. HOLT

Language in Education *Theory & Practice*

A co-publication of the Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co., Inc.,
prepared by the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, an adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse

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To Grace, for teaching me about family, literacy, and life.

PREFACE

If we don't change directions, we will end up where we are headed.

—Chinese proverb

Assessment and evaluation strategies help staff members and learners identify what direction their family literacy project is taking. The strategies also provide information that can be used for staff and learners who want to change course to achieve different results. This handbook was developed to assist staff members to design and use alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation. Most family literacy projects use standardized as well as alternative measures. By using a variety of approaches, staff can obtain in-depth information about the learners' backgrounds, the progress the learners are making, and the overall effectiveness of the project. The handbook does not contain all the information needed to design a comprehensive evaluation of a project; rather, it is intended as a supplemental resource for creating and using alternative approaches. Because family English literacy projects have a great deal in common with other family literacy projects, the information should be helpful to those working to improve assessment, evaluation, and instruction in projects serving language-minority families. These projects might be funded through a variety of sources.

Development of the handbook began in December 1990 at a coordination meeting of fourteen Family English Literacy Projects (FELP) in California funded by Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The needs assessment conducted then indicated that staff considered assessment and evaluation as among the most critical challenges they faced. FELP staff emphasized the need for procedures and instruments tailored to the learners, curriculum, schedule, and other key characteristics of their projects. Although standardized tests provided a partial view of what was happening in their projects, they needed additional strategies for assessing language proficiency as well as hard-to-measure outcomes such as self-confidence and literacy awareness.

As they wrote their chapters, the authors worked closely with family literacy staff to create a handbook that would meet their needs for alternative assessment. The authors met frequently with representatives of family literacy projects and obtained feedback on drafts of their chapters. In general, family literacy staff stated that the handbook should do the following:

1. Demystify assessment and evaluation. Staff members of family literacy projects can benefit from direction in assessment and evaluation in consultation with a professional evaluator.

2. Present concrete suggestions for designing and using alternative assessment instruments and procedures. Staff want information that is immediately useful and sample instruments that can be adapted for their projects.

3. Focus on a limited number of assessment approaches. Rather than presenting general information about many different alternative measures, the authors concentrated on four alternative approaches: surveys, interviews, observation measures, and performance samples.

The chapters are organized according to the sequence in which alternative approaches are likely to be considered, designed, and used in a family literacy project. Chapter I contains an introduction to family literacy and presents some of the special evaluation issues related to implementing a family literacy project. Next, Chapter II presents a model for integrating program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Chapters III, IV, and V illustrate the three phases of assessment and evaluation: (1) determining learners' needs and establishing baseline data; (2) documenting learners' progress toward meeting project objectives; and (3) collecting, analyzing, using, and reporting data obtained with alternative approaches. Chapter VI provides an overview of the development of the handbook and a description of the revisions that were made based on comments received about the field-test edition.

The examples of alternative assessment instruments presented in the handbook are not intended as ready-to-use assessment tools; rather, the authors understand that staff members will modify these tools or create their own instruments and approaches based on the unique characteristics of the learners, staff, and program design. As the instruments and other information in the volume are adapted to the specific needs of individual projects, assessment and evaluation of family literacy projects will become more beneficial to learners and staff.

Mary T. Mahony
Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs
U.S. Department of Education

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[1] The titles listed in the acknowledgments were current when this document was developed.

tions that improved the readability of the chapters. Paul Lee, Senior Graphic Artist, designed the graphics and layout of the entire volume. Juan Sanchez, Senior Graphic Artist, assisted Paul Lee in the production of the final manuscript.

The graphic, designed by Paul Lee, is a file that represents the importance of collecting and organizing alternative assessment data in ways that meet the needs of learners and staff. The open file has one folder in use, symbolic of the importance of using data for improving the family literacy project.

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Daniel D. Holt, Editor
Sacramento, California

The Family

It is a fragile place
In constant search of balance.

Where children look for love and safety
To explore life's wonders.
Where parents struggle
With holding on and letting go.

It flourishes when its members
Become everything they are and want to be.
When each one's needs are met
And each supports the others to meet theirs.

Daniel D. Holt
Sacramento, California

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CHAPTER I

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

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Among the many responsibilities of staff members of a *family literacy project** are the tasks of assessing and evaluating their project. Such responsibility involves developing a comprehensive evaluation design to determine the degree to which project goals and *objectives* are met. The purpose of this handbook is to assist staff members with implementing a key part of effective *evaluation*—that is, designing and implementing alternative approaches to *assessment*. By integrating *alternative assessment* approaches with *standardized assessment* measures, staff can obtain more accurate and complete information to improve their *project*. Much of the information contained in this and other chapters of the handbook is based on the experiences of staff members and learners in projects funded under ESEA Title VII *Family English Literacy Programs (FELP)*. Because FELP projects have a great deal in common with other family literacy projects, the information should be helpful to those working to improve assessment, evaluation, and instruction in projects that serve language-minority families. These projects might be funded through a variety of sources.

This chapter will first present the distinctions between standardized and alternative assessments. Next, the special evaluation needs of family literacy projects will be highlighted. Finally, the chapter will provide overviews of Chapters II–VI of the handbook.

* See the Glossary on pages 137-138 of this publication for definitions of *italicized* key terms that appear in this chapter.

Standardized and Alternative Assessments

This handbook is based on the assumption that successful assessment and evaluation depend on using a variety of approaches. Some approaches are standardized, such as the *Basic English Skills Test (BEST)* (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982) or the *Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS,* 1982). In contrast, alternative approaches refer to procedures and instruments that are tailored specifically to the learners, curriculum, and overall design of the project. In this section, standardized and alternative approaches are described.

Standardized Approaches

Standardized approaches rely on instruments that are created to allow for comparisons between individuals' current achievement and the average performance (norms) of selected participants (norming group). These approaches offer many advantages to literacy project staff; the tests can be obtained readily, administered easily, and scored immediately and accurately in a cost-effective manner. Staff can use standardized instruments to compare the performance of project participants with the norms established by the test developers.

Standardized approaches, however, provide only part of the information needed to document learners' progress. For example, the results of standardized measures may not be useful or meaningful to staff members if the content of the tests is not related to the goals and curriculum of the project. Also, the tests may measure discrete skills such as word recognition, but the project may be designed to strengthen shared literacy activities between parents and children. In addition, standardized tests may be based on a norming group that differs from the participants in the project, thereby making it difficult to compare the participants' performance with the standard (norm group).

Alternative approaches allow staff members to identify what is important in their project and select assessment strategies that are tailored to the unique characteristics of the learners and the project.

Because standardized measures usually focus on **products** (i.e., responses to specific test items), they may fail to provide useful information about important **processes** such as enjoying books or obtaining needed social services. Furthermore, many teachers may not fully understand how to interpret and use the scores. Even when staff are fully trained in the use of standardized tests, the scores may not provide enough information about student learning or information that is useful for making decisions about the next steps that should be taken for designing activities, selecting instructional materials, or refining project goals.

Alternative Approaches

Alternative approaches to standardized assessment and evaluation may be characterized as flexible, representative of the curriculum, meaningful to learners, and indicative of learners' acquired ability or knowledge (Navarrete, Wilde, Nelson, Martinez, & Hargett, 1990). Alternative approaches allow staff to identify what is important in

their project and select assessment strategies that are tailored to the unique characteristics of the learners and the project. Unlike standardized tests, alternative approaches can identify the learners' strengths and needs without comparing results with an external standard or norming group. Alternative approaches provide multidimensional, highly current views of the learners' progress in many different contexts. Because the contents of the instruments can be linked directly to the curriculum of the project, alternative approaches give staff members immediate access to feedback for planning subsequent learning activities.

Four alternative approaches are discussed in this volume: *surveys, interviews, observation measures,* and *performance samples.* Other examples of assessment alternatives include *portfolios,* journals, and investigations (Wrigley, 1992). To provide a consistent analysis in all the chapters, the authors have adopted definitions of the approaches that may differ somewhat from the way in which they are discussed elsewhere in the assessment literature. The following is a description of the four alternative approaches presented in this handbook.

Surveys are used to obtain general information from large numbers of individuals.

Surveys are used to obtain general information from large numbers of individuals. Questions used in surveys may be open-ended, allowing subjects to provide their own responses, or closed-ended, requiring subjects to select only from the response choices provided. The answers may be recorded by the respondents or by the person(s) administering the survey. Examples of surveys are presented in Chapter III.

Interviews are designed to collect detailed information.

Interviews are designed to collect detailed information. The interviewer asks questions orally and may make follow-up inquiries to clarify or amplify responses. The interviewer may document the results by taking notes or tape-recording responses (Bell, 1988). Although interviews are usually administered individually, they also may be conducted with groups of people. Chapters III and V describe how interviews can be used with *focus groups.*

Observation measures are used for collecting and recording information about various aspects of the program.

Observation measures are used for collecting and recording information about aspects of the project such as learner characteristics, group interactions, or literacy performance. They may be used for closed-ended assessments, such as indicating the learner's level of listening comprehension, or they may be open-ended, such as when a staff member judges how confident a student appears when participating in a cooperative learning group. Chapter IV provides examples of observation measures.

Performance samples are examples of the learners' work in selected tasks.

Performance samples are examples of the learners' work in selected tasks. For instance, learners may be asked to write a story, give an oral presentation, participate in a role play, or read a poem. Staff members then determine how the task will be documented and how the learner's ability to carry out the task will be assessed. For example, stories could be collected in written form, role plays could be videotaped, and poem readings could be audiotaped. Performance

samples differ from observation measures in that observation measures record only the assessment of learners' behavior or performance. Performance samples include the learner's actual work and the results of the assessment of the work (for example, *holistic scores* on writing samples). Examples of performance samples can be found in Chapter IV.

A variety of techniques may be used to record the information that is collected in any of the four alternative assessments. For example, a check list might be used to indicate responses made to questions in a survey. A *frequency count* could be taken of the answers obtained in an interview. A rating scale might be used to record judgments in an observation measure.

Portfolios could be used to collect and organize samples of learners' writing, results of surveys and individual interviews, information collected through observations, and other examples of learners' accomplishments. What is included in the portfolio depends on the objectives of the project. Staff can make the contents highly personalized and meaningful by asking the learner to help decide what is placed in the portfolio including measures of self-reflection.

The authors present examples of four alternative approaches with the understanding that project staff members will modify the examples or create their own instruments and approaches based on the unique characteristics of the learners, staff, and program design.

The authors present examples of four alternative approaches with the understanding that project staff members will modify the examples or create their own instruments and approaches based on the unique characteristics of the learners, staff, and program design. Project staff should consider many factors when selecting an alternative approach. For example, open-ended responses may give flexibility to respondents but take additional time and energy for staff to analyze. Observation measures are useful for documenting staff's judgments but may yield different data depending on which staff member is doing the observing. Any assessment approach has limitations, but by using a variety of instruments, staff can help ensure that they will obtain a comprehensive view of their project. They may find it helpful to seek the assistance of an experienced evaluator to design and implement alternative assessment approaches. An evaluator can help staff create instruments that are psychometrically sound, analyze the results of the assessments, and make recommendations for improving the project.

Any assessment approach has limitations, but by using a variety of instruments, staff can help ensure that they will obtain a comprehensive view of their project.

This handbook focuses on using alternative approaches to (1) identify the learners' needs; (2) determine the learners' ongoing progress in meeting project objectives; (3) ascertain the overall success of the project; (4) give staff immediate and relevant feedback; (5) enable learners to assess their own development; and (6) help meet the evaluation guidelines established by funding sources of family literacy projects. The authors assume that staff members will implement alternative approaches in conjunction with standardized measures. By creating evaluation designs that integrate alternative and standardized approaches, staff will have in-depth information to make decisions about project improvement.

Role of Evaluation

An effective evaluation design provides learners and staff members with accurate and useful information for designing, modifying, and improving their project. In order to create effective assessment and evaluation procedures, staff and learners need to (1) clarify the goals and objectives of the project; (2) develop indicators of progress in attaining the goals

A word about objectives . . .

This volume contains suggestions on how *objectives* can be used to help project staff define the outcomes or changes that are expected as a result of the instructional program. The content of objectives is determined by what the learners need, what the staff members are prepared to teach, and what is possible to achieve within the time and budget constraints of the project.

During the initial planning of a project, staff members can use the development of objectives as a way to focus the direction of instruction based on the results of the needs assessment. For example, will the project concentrate on listening, speaking, reading, or writing skills—or some combination? To what extent will the learners' native language abilities be developed? How will the project help parents support their children's school achievement?

Some objectives may deal with clearly observable outcomes such as the ability to read or write a piece of text; others may specify changes that are more difficult to see such as self-confidence, group participation, or literacy awareness. Each objective should specify only one outcome. Whatever the outcome, an objective should include assessment procedures and instruments that can be used to measure the extent to which the objective is being achieved.

Objectives should not be immutable, rigid directives from the staff to the learners. Nor should they be developed by staff without involving the learners or assessing their needs. Rather, objectives should be clear statements representing a range of possible outcomes that are refined as the project is implemented. Among the myriad literacy-related activities that a project might address, objectives specify where the staff and learners could begin their collaborative effort toward building a successful project.

Objectives should be clear statements representing a range of possible outcomes that are refined as the project is implemented.

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and objectives; and (3) identify the information they need to collect to determine the degree to which success has been achieved.

The focus of the evaluation should be based on the goals and objectives that learners and staff members have established. For example, if the learners are composing stories they will read to their children, the evaluation design should include the procedures for collecting information about the learners' compositions and the strategies they used for sharing them with their children.

The focus of the evaluation should be based on the goals and objectives that learners and staff members have established.

Assessment versus Evaluation

In this volume, assessment refers to the use of instruments and procedures to gather data on a regular basis. Assessment may focus on identifying learners' needs, documenting learners' progress toward meeting their own goals, and ascertaining the extent to which the project objectives are being met.

Evaluation, on the other hand, refers to the integration and analysis of assessment data at a given point in time for such purposes as (1) interpreting learners' needs; (2) developing goals and objectives; (3) designing the content of the curriculum; (4) selecting instructional approaches; (5) monitoring the implementation of the project; (6) identifying obstacles to achieving objectives; and (7) determining the overall success of the project. An example of an evaluation activity is the *annual evaluation report* that is required of projects funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education.

This handbook presents evaluation as part of a comprehensive process of planning, implementing, and improving a project (see Chapter II for a description of the planning process). Evaluation should not be an isolated event that is conducted at the end of each year. Rather, evaluation is an ongoing, collaborative effort by the learners, staff members, and evaluator to clarify learners' needs, refine project goals, design curriculum content, and develop instructional methodology. The essence of the evaluation is the participants' specification of what constitutes success in their project, what approaches they will use to assess the level of success they have achieved, and how evaluation results will be used to improve the project.

Evaluation is an ongoing, collaborative effort by the learners, staff members, and evaluator to clarify learners' needs, refine project goals, design curriculum content, and develop instructional methodology.

Diversity in Family Literacy Projects

Family literacy projects address the needs of adults and children who are strikingly diverse in terms of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the characteristics of their families, the demography of their communities, and their reasons for wanting to improve their literacy abilities. This section provides some examples of the diversity in families and in the design of literacy projects (see also Holt & Holt, in press).

Participants, Location, and Schedule

Family literacy projects are characterized by diversity in terms of participants, location, and schedule. Many different groups are served such as American Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Haitian, Hispanic, Hmong, Korean, Russian, Samoan, and Vietnamese. The ages of participants also vary among projects. Some projects focus on young adults who are not in school. Others enroll only adults, some of whom may be parents. Still other projects include opportunities for parents and children to learn together in intergenerational activities. Projects may be located in large cities or rural areas, operated during the day or evening, or conducted in schools, community centers, or the participants' homes.

Family literacy projects may be located in large cities or rural areas, operated during the day or evening, or conducted in schools, community centers, or the participants' homes.

Program Design

Literacy projects also differ in the way in which they have responded to the program requirements of their sources of funding. Most projects include activities that promote the learners' acquisition of English. Some projects may focus on language development, whereas others integrate language and life skills. Other projects focus on oral communication as a prelude to literacy, and others explicitly address the development of reading and writing. Some projects include activities to help learners develop their abilities in English and their native languages. Other projects assist participants to improve their knowledge of topics such as mathematics, nutrition, the U.S. educational system, and social services. Subject matter may be taught in English or a combination of English and the learners' native language.

Home-School Linkage

Projects are further distinguished by the degree to which they include instruction on how parents and family members can facilitate children's success in school. Some projects attempt to create a close link between the parents' learning activities and the educational experiences of their children. For example, a project might be designed to help parents learn skills that would enable them to serve as volunteers at school or to work with their children at home in school-related activities.

The special characteristics of family literacy projects necessitate the use of assessment and evaluation approaches that are specifically tailored to the needs of learners and staff.

Characteristics of Family Literacy Projects

The special characteristics of family literacy projects necessitate the use of assessment and evaluation approaches that are specifically tailored to the needs of learners and staff. Alternative approaches yield information that learners and staff can use to set project goals, decide on instructional priorities, document successes and failures, and improve future activities. In December 1990, staff members from FELP projects in California held a coordination meeting in which they analyzed the unique aspects of family literacy projects and considered innovative approaches to evaluation that would meet their needs. This

section is based in part on the discussions at the seminar. (See *Proceedings from the Family English Literacy Seminar,* 1991, for a summary of the results of the seminar.)

Enrollment and Attendance

Unlike students in elementary and secondary schools, learners in most family literacy projects enroll voluntarily. However, before they can enroll and benefit from services, they must know that a project exists. Because participants may enroll in a project at any time, staff members must be prepared to collect *baseline data* whenever new participants enroll. After enrollment, many adult learners may have difficulty attending project activities because of scheduling conflicts caused by personal, family, or job-related issues.

Assessment and evaluation strategies need to take into account the uneven enrollment and attendance patterns that characterize many projects. Ongoing use of alternative approaches is more effective than infrequent pre- and postmeasures for enabling staff to identify obstacles to the learners' participation and make adjustments that will facilitate enrollment and attendance.

Learners come to the literacy project with different goals and needs for acquiring language and literacy.

Multiple Contexts, Goals, and Needs

Adult learners face demands in the home, community, school, and work place. Depending on the requirements of these contexts, learners come to the literacy project with different goals and needs for acquiring language and literacy. Some adults may want to learn English to work in a restaurant. Others may be interested in opening a business. Some may need to learn English for a job interview, and others may want to help their children write folk tales in their native language. Still others may have more general goals such as learning English to communicate and negotiate with native speakers.

Adult learners also have different levels of knowledge about the school, community, and work place. Staff members need assessment instruments to obtain accurate information about the learners' knowledge and needs in order to plan appropriate instruction. Alternative approaches, which can be tailored specifically to the learners' language and cultural backgrounds, provide staff with highly specialized and useful information. Staff members can use the assessment results for designing objectives and selecting instructional content and methodology that will validate the learners' prior experiences and facilitate their success in the project.

Families differ according to the purposes for which they use their native language and English and the degree to which they depend on each language to carry out daily tasks.

Literacy and Biliteracy

Most participants in family English literacy projects have a native language other than English. However, families differ according to the purposes for which they use their native language and English and the degree to which they depend on each language to carry out daily tasks. For example, in some families, spouses may use their native language with each other but use a mixture of English and

their native language with their children. Learners also have different levels of proficiency and educational experiences in their native language. Some learners may have received a high school diploma, but others may have come from countries in which no formal schooling was available.

According to Quintero and Huerta-Macías (1990), to provide appropriate instruction, staff need to know the parents' and children's proficiency levels and uses of their native language and English. The lack of standardized instruments to assess proficiency in languages other than English makes the use of alternative approaches essential for determining the participants' needs, competencies, and growth in their native languages. Chapters III and IV contain suggestions for assessing native language proficiency.

Alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation allow staff to collect information that can provide answers to important questions about the progress that parents and children are making in teaching and learning from each other.

Parent and Child Outcomes

When family literacy projects create objectives and instructional activities for parents and children, staff members need to monitor changes based on the special characteristics of two very different kinds of participants. If parents and children are learning together in intergenerational activities, the evaluation design needs to examine the effect that parents and children have on each other's success in language learning, literacy development, academic achievement, and other outcomes identified by the projects. Alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation allow staff to collect information that can provide answers to important questions about the progress that parents and children are making in teaching and learning from each other.

Staff Knowledge

Staff need to know about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of adult learners to design and implement effective strategies for recruiting participants, identifying learners' needs, and designing appropriate instructional activities. Staff members may need training in second language acquisition, bilingual development, and adult education so they can create effective activities for language-minority adult learners.

Because alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation are developed in close consultation with staff and learners, they are effective for helping staff improve their knowledge of learners and assessing the ongoing progress of the project. Chapter II emphasizes the importance of the development of a *literacy framework*, that is, staff members' and learners' shared understanding of the learners' literacy needs, program goals, curriculum and methodology, and approaches for assessing and evaluating literacy-related activities.

Issues in Evaluating Family Literacy Projects

Projects that are funded under ESEA Title VII are guided by the evaluation requirements set forth in appropriate federal statutes and regulations. Other funding sources have their own evaluation require-

ments. Staff members need to determine how they can construct an evaluation design that meets the requirements of their funding source **and** provides useful information for assessing learners and evaluating the project. By combining alternative and standardized measures, staff members and learners will improve their access to useful and accurate information for making decisions about their project.

In general, the requirements of most funding sources specify that three areas be considered in designing the evaluation: (1) student outcome data; (2) technical standards; and (3) implementation data. Outcome data refer to what the students learn during the project. The students in FELP projects may be adults, parents, parents and their children, or out-of-school youth. Project staff need to examine the regulations and determine how the required data can be obtained for all the participants in the project. Chapters II through V of this volume emphasize the importance of collecting and analyzing outcome data based on the special features of the project. Issues regarding the evaluation of implementation data that are unrelated to student outcomes (for example, staff development) are not addressed in this volume.

By combining alternative and standardized measures, staff members and learners will improve their access to useful and accurate information for making decisions about their project.

This section presents some of the issues related to evaluating family literacy projects. Although the issues are based on the experiences of staff members' evaluation of ESEA Title VII FELP projects, the information should be helpful for individuals working in any family literacy project.

Comparison Group

At least part of the evaluation design of a literacy project may include the assessment of the educational progress of project participants against an appropriate nonproject comparison group. Staff members can meet this requirement with a standardized test by comparing the participants' progress with the test's norming group. To complement the results of the standardized test, staff could use alternative approaches to assess the learners' progress without having to compare their performance with a nonproject comparison group.

Instead of standardized tests, or in addition to them, staff may use alternative assessment approaches with a nonproject comparison group. For example, the current participants' performance can be compared with (1) the performance of individuals who are not participating in the project and have similar characteristics to the participants or (2) baseline data that had been collected at an earlier point in the project on the current participants and all other participants who were enrolled at an earlier time. Staff should note they may not need to compare the results of every assessment in the project with a nonproject comparison group. Chapter V presents suggestions for using alternative approaches with a nonproject comparison group.

Representativeness of the Findings

Evaluation findings should apply to the participants, schools, or agencies served by the project. In other words, the conclusions made

in an evaluation report should be derived from data on learners served by the project and on the full range of services provided by the project. Although absenteeism and transiency may prevent staff from obtaining assessment data on all learners, data should be collected from a sample of learners that is representative of the learners served by the project. Similarly, staff should obtain information about the learners' performance in the major components of the project such as language development, literacy, parenting, and cultural adaptation. Alternative approaches enable staff to tailor assessment and evaluation to the characteristics of the learners and the services of the project, thereby helping staff to ensure that the evaluation findings are indicative of what is actually happening in the project.

Staff should obtain information about the learners' performance in the major components of the project such as language development, literacy, parenting, and cultural adaptation.

Validity and Reliability

Alternative instruments and procedures should be *valid;* that is, they should measure what they claim to measure. Assessments also should be *reliable;* in other words, they should produce similar results consistently. Staff members need to devote time and resources to develop and field test alternative approaches in order to document their validity and reliability (see *Guidelines for Developing Reliable and Valid Alternative Assessments,* EAC–West, 1991). Chapter V addresses issues of validity and reliability in the evaluation design.

Multiple Measures

A variety of alternative approaches should be used for conducting intake and initial assessments, monitoring progress, and assessing the overall success of the project.

A variety of alternative approaches should be used for conducting intake and initial assessments, monitoring progress, and assessing the overall success of the project. Multiple instruments and procedures can provide staff with a comprehensive view of the learners, the progress they are making, and the effectiveness of the activities of the project.

Overview of the Handbook

This handbook is intended to assist staff members in family literacy projects to design and implement alternative approaches to assessing and evaluating their project. Each chapter addresses a different aspect of assessment and evaluation.

Chapter II contains a model for integrating program planning, implementation, and evaluation activities. A central element of a successful project is a conceptual framework for literacy that is shared among the staff and learners. The framework represents the staff's collective thinking regarding the definition of literacy, appropriate instructional approaches, the respective roles of staff and learners, and other factors that influence the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project. The author points out how the program planning and evaluation processes operate in synchrony when all participants share a common understanding of the design and focus of the project.

Chapter III addresses initial assessment, including needs assessment, intake, and placement. The chapter contains examples of alternative approaches that have been used successfully for initial assessment:

surveys, interviews, and writing samples. The author suggests strategies for using initial assessments to yield accurate baseline information about the learners so staff can design appropriate learning activities and determine the extent to which the learners are making progress in the project.

Chapter IV describes how alternative assessment and evaluation approaches can be used to document learners' progress toward meeting instructional objectives. Three alternative approaches are presented in detail: observation measures, interviews, and writing samples. The author emphasizes the importance of ongoing assessment for (1) helping staff members determine the extent to which their instructional efforts are leading to positive results and (2) showing learners that they are making progress toward meeting their own goals.

Chapter V provides suggestions for using surveys, performance samples, focus groups, and observation measures to demonstrate progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the project. The author presents strategies for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data obtained with each of the alternative approaches. The chapter underscores the importance of staff members' and learners' use of the evaluation data for (1) making decisions that will refine the goals, objectives, curriculum, and overall design of the project and (2) determining the progress made toward attaining the goals of the project.

By integrating alternative approaches with standardized measures, staff can obtain accurate and complete information for evaluating their project.

Chapter VI describes the process that was used in designing and field testing the handbook. The author uses the planning model presented in Chapter II to illustrate how the contents were developed and how feedback was collected during the one-year field test. The chapter also contains information that readers requested about standardized tests and work place literacy.

Summary

This volume is designed to help staff members use alternative approaches to assessing and evaluating their literacy project. No single approach to assessment can provide a comprehensive view of what is happening in a literacy project. By integrating alternative assessment approaches with standardized assessment measures, staff can obtain accurate and complete information for evaluating their project. Four alternative approaches are discussed in this volume: surveys, interviews, observation measures, and performance samples. Each chapter presents strategies for designing and implementing alternative approaches that are tailored to the needs of individual projects. The chapters follow a sequence that might be used by staff in addressing assessment and evaluation issues: (1) planning the project and creating the evaluation design (Chapter II); (2) determining learners' needs and establishing baseline data (Chapter III); (3) assessing learners' progress toward meeting project objectives (Chapter IV); (4) collecting, analyzing, using, and reporting data

obtained with alternative approaches (Chapter V); and (5) understanding the role of planning and evaluation in creating and improving a project (Chapter VI).

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CHAPTER II

INTEGRATING PROGRAM PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

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"If you want something done right, do it yourself" best expresses the theme of this chapter. Much has been written regarding the shortcomings and failures of traditional *assessment** and *evaluation* to meet the needs of adult literacy projects. Current research and practice in adult literacy suggest ways of improving the utility and relevance of assessment and research efforts. However, the most effective alternatives to traditional approaches are created by staff members and adult learners as they collaborate to improve their own literacy projects.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe a process for planning, implementing, and evaluating literacy programs for limited-English-proficient (LEP) adults, parents, and children. The process emphasizes the importance of using alternative approaches for designing and evaluating literacy programs.

The chapter is divided into four sections: (1) an explanation of how assessment and evaluation procedures are determined in part by how learning is defined; (2) a discussion of the requirements for an *alternative assessment* and evaluation design; (3) a description of the importance of a well defined literacy framework for the project; and (4) a presentation of a planning process that project staff can use as a guide to develop the instructional program and an appropriate assessment and evaluation design.

* See the Glossary on pages 137-138 of this publication for definitions of *italicized* key terms that appear in this chapter.

Views of Learning

How learning is defined helps determine how literacy is defined and evaluated. The way staff members define learning influences what assessment information they collect, how they collect it, and how they use it in the *project.* Currently there are two views of learning with decidedly different implications for data collection and use. The first is a traditional view of learning that has dominated education since the turn of the century. The second view, bolstered by research in cognitive psychology, is helping to redefine evaluation.

Traditional View of Learning

Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, and Gardner (1991) explain how the field of evaluation has come to rely almost exclusively on standardized tests. Since the turn of the century, intelligence has been viewed as a fixed attribute (unchangeable, like skin color), able to be ranked (somewhere on a normal curve), and genetically determined. Educators who hold this view of intelligence classify students into specific groups based on the assumption that they have different abilities and therefore need a special curriculum. Such approaches can lead educators to assign students permanently to groups according to their perceived abilities. Because intelligence is seen as a fixed attribute, learning is viewed as one dimensional, with individuals progressing through a series of discrete steps from simple entry level skills to full mastery. The perception of learning as molecular and hierarchical has guided the development and use of standardized tests.

According to Wolf and others, "Standardized tests . . . are constructed so that only a few can score high; they have yielded artifacts rather than authentic samples, promoted an isolated view of learning, and treated assessment as a matter of pure measurement" (Wolf, et al., 1991, p. 47). The tests contribute to the view that assessment results are end products and that cognition is an individual, isolated activity. Test developers have often created instruments that are more effective at ranking students than identifying where they are developmentally. The ranking of students results in various negative consequences, not the least of which is that those who rank at or near the bottom are ignored in the learning process or otherwise stigmatized. Contemporary research in developmental and cognitive psychology, however, has questioned traditional assumptions about learning and suggests decidedly different directions for data collection.

The ranking of students results in various negative consequences, not the least of which is that those who rank at or near the bottom are ignored in the learning process or otherwise stigmatized.

Learning Redefined

Current research suggests that intelligence is not a fixed phenomenon but a dynamic, global capacity. All human activity requires that "the learner actively develop knowledge by observing, inferring, generating rules, and building theories" (Wolf, et al., 1991, p. 48). Learning should be viewed not as the development of a series of discrete skills, but as a process involving "qualitative and uneven

shifts in understanding" (Wolf, et al., 1991, p. 50). Learning represents a series of ever increasing, complex understandings as an individual observes, theorizes, tests, observes further, and readjusts the theory.

Learning is not only the acquisition of discrete information; it is also the organization of information as a basis for further learning. Furthermore, learning does not occur in isolation. It is affected profoundly by external stimulation from other individuals, environmental pressures, or resources. This redefinition of learning suggests that staff members in family literacy projects need to consider carefully the kind of evaluation data that is collected and the methods of gathering data. Assessment procedures should be used to determine the learner's ability to construct and apply knowledge for a variety of purposes.

Assessment, evaluation, and other components of a literacy project need to work together in a mutually supportive manner.

Importance of a Literacy Framework

Assessment, evaluation, and other components of a literacy project need to work together in a mutually supportive manner. One way to coordinate the components is to create a *literacy framework.* A project's literacy framework may be described as the staff members' and learners' shared understanding of learners' literacy needs, program goals, curriculum and methodology, and approaches for assessing and evaluating literacy development.

To design and implement alternative assessment instruments, staff need to identify outcomes and changes that constitute the learners' success in the project. In other words, how will the staff and learners know that progress is being made in attaining the objectives of the project? The staff members' and learners' shared understanding of the nature of literacy and the specific outcomes that the participants are working toward represent key parts of the project's literacy framework.

As was pointed out in Chapter I, family literacy projects have different program designs. Some projects may help parents improve their individual language abilities, whereas others focus on shared literacy activities between parents and their children. Developing a literacy framework is one of the first steps the staff and adult learners can take to create a common understanding of the role of literacy in the project and in the learners' lives.

A Collaborative Approach to Planning and Evaluation

One of the keys to linking the project's literacy framework, program design, and assessment and evaluation procedures is a collaborative approach to planning and evaluation. This section presents a rationale and process for creating a

literacy framework for the project and describes the steps involved in a collaborative approach to planning and evaluation using examples taken from actual FELP projects in California.

Contexts for Literacy

Individuals and language groups differ according to the ways in which they use language and literacy and the settings or contexts in which they read and write (Lytle, Belzer, Schultz, & Vannozzi, 1989). Thus, adult learners have different goals and needs for literacy development. Learners may need to be able to write notes to their children's teacher, interpret monthly bills and bus schedules, decipher product labels, help their children with school work, read a repair manual, or complete an application for admission to a training program. Alternative assessments offer staff the advantage of being able to measure the learners' ability to use literacy in contexts that are relevant to their daily lives.

Alternative assessments offer staff the advantage of being able measure the learners' ability to use literacy in contexts that are relevant to their daily lives.

Literacy is best viewed as a range of practices or activities (Scribner, 1987). In a recent research study conducted by Wrigley and Guth (1992), ESL literacy instruction was defined as "supporting language-minority adults with little English and little formal education in their efforts to understand and use English in its many forms (oral and written, including prose, document, and quantitative literacy), in a variety of contexts (family, community, school, work), so that they can reach their fullest potential and achieve their own goals (personal, professional, academic)" (p.7). Chapter IV provides detailed suggestions for how curriculum and assessment can be matched with this holistic view of literacy.

Project staff need to work closely with adult learners to design assessment procedures that will identify the types of reading and writing the learners are doing and their individual "purposes and aspirations" (Lytle, et al., 1989, p. 55). The procedures should help staff and learners examine their own views of learning, literacy, and how literacy is used in their daily lives. Staff and learners also can collaborate in designing and implementing evaluation activities including analyzing and interpreting evaluation data. Auerbach (1992) emphasizes that adult learners bring to the project their own goals, prior literacy experiences, and attitudes toward reading, writing, and learning, all of which interact and affect what and how they will learn. Such background information needs to be used to create meaningful assessment and evaluation activities in the project.

Learners bring to the project their own goals, prior literacy experiences, and attitudes toward reading, writing, and learning, all of which interact and affect what and how they will learn.

Lytle et al. (1989) designed a framework to guide the development of assessments and evaluations that consider the diverse needs and contexts of adult learners. Their framework has four dimensions: 1) literacy practices; 2) reading, writing, learning strategies, and interests; 3) perceptions of reading and writing, teaching and learning; and 4) goals. *Literacy practices* or activities refer to how, when, and why learners use literacy in their lives. After the staff and learners have identified the role of literacy in various contexts, assessment and

evaluation approaches can be used to measure changes in the way learners use literacy as the project is implemented.

The framework outlined by Lytle et al. (1989) may be helpful to FELP participants who are designing their own literacy framework. For example, the literacy framework should include a definition of literacy; an identification of the role that literacy plays in learners' lives in various contexts; documentation of the learners' goals for literacy development; the focus of curriculum content and activities; and the basic direction of the assessment and evaluation procedures. Collaboration among staff and adult learners in developing a literacy framework enables all participants in the project to increase their understanding of literacy and improve their ability to use literacy to achieve their own goals.

Collaboration among staff and adult learners in developing a literacy framework enables all participants in the project to increase their understanding of literacy and improve their ability to use literacy to achieve their own goals.

The next section presents suggestions for designing a literacy framework that is based on the learners' needs. The literacy framework and planning process contain elements that were borrowed from the work of Lytle, Auerbach, and others. The information is presented to encourage projects to begin the process of creating learner-centered, participatory approaches to literacy development. The reader should understand, however, that this chapter and others in the volume contain suggestions, such as developing project objectives and using ready-made curriculum, that some advocates of participatory literacy approaches might consider inconsistent with authentic learner-centered programs.

Developing A Literacy Framework Through Collaborative Planning

The development of a literacy framework is the first step in designing alternative assessment and evaluation procedures. The literacy framework is comparable to model curriculum standards that educators can use as a foundation for developing programs that meet local needs (see California Department of Education, 1992).

One of the assumptions of an effective literacy framework is that adult learners acquire abilities and knowledge in a spiral versus sequential fashion, with increasing levels of proficiency and understanding emerging over time.

One of the assumptions of an effective literacy framework is that adult learners acquire abilities and knowledge in a spiral versus sequential fashion, with increasing levels of proficiency and understanding emerging over time. As staff and learners work together to create the framework and related curriculum, they also can develop project-based assessment and evaluation procedures to document progress toward meeting objectives and making improvements in the program. The importance of the literacy framework as a foundation for assessment is underscored by Lytle, Marmor, and Penner: "Our starting point was the understanding that assessment must correspond to program philosophy and goals, since assessment procedures embody and thus convey particular concepts about literacy" (1986, p. 22).

At a meeting of selected California FELP projects, staff members attempted to reach consensus on a definition of literacy. The results of their discussion are summarized in the seven points listed below (*Results of the Focus Group Meeting*, 1991, p. 4).

1. Literacy is finding meaning from print in order to fulfill the learners' academic, psychological, political, and social goals.
2. Literacy includes a range of activities or practices in multiple contexts with a variety of people. It may involve the use of more than one language.
3. Contexts differ with respect to the complexity of literacy demands.
4. Literacy activities include reading, writing, and learning strategies.
5. Literacy in more than one language strengthens learners' linguistic and cognitive development and increases their sociocultural knowledge.
6. The development of literacy is influenced by the language, culture, status, experiences, and perceptions of learners and teachers.
7. The concept of literacy is based on the teachers' and learners' values and beliefs.

Literacy in more than one language strengthens learners' linguistic and cognitive development and increases their sociocultural knowledge.

These seven statements reflect the staff members' underlying assumptions about literacy. From this initial framework, several implications can be drawn. First, literacy should be developed in ways that are meaningful to learners. Second, the literacy curriculum needs to address the ways in which learners want to use literacy. Third, learners should be deeply involved in the development of the curriculum content. Fourth, literacy instruction is a collaborative effort between the learner and the teacher.

In an actual project, the literacy framework would be refined as the project is implemented and evaluated. Initial aspects of the framework might be quite general; however, as the staff and learners continue to work together, they will improve their understanding of the nature of literacy and how it can be fostered in the project.

To support a literacy framework such as the one described above, assessment and evaluation procedures should do the following:

1. Focus on the learners—that is, accurately identify learners' strengths and needs and assess learners' progress in the project;
2. Document how improvement in learners' literacy development affects their children, work responsibilities, and community activities;
3. Rely on a variety of instruments and strategies for collecting data;
4. Reflect changes in learners' perceptions, attitudes, and behavior inside and outside the classroom;
5. Collect and analyze data on a continual basis throughout the project.

Process and Product Evaluation

Alternative assessment and evaluation procedures raise a number of questions related to process and product evaluation. A **process evaluation** focuses on how a project is implemented. A question that might be addressed in a process evaluation would be the following: How and to what extent are learners involved in identifying their literacy goals and objectives, designing the learning activities of the project, and assessing their progress in attaining their goals?

A **product evaluation** is concerned with the effect of the project on the adult learners. A product evaluation addresses such questions

as the following: To what extent have adult learners increased their language proficiency? To what degree have they attained their personal literacy goals? To what extent does increased literacy development affect how learners (1) perceive themselves; (2) relate to their spouses or other family members; (3) respond to friends and co-workers; and/or (4) use their literacy skills in new settings or for different purposes?

By using a variety of alternative approaches, staff and learners can develop a comprehensive picture of what is happening in the project and satisfy the needs of both process and product evaluation.

To answer these and other questions, learners need to be assessed in different ways. The alternative approaches presented in Chapters III, IV, and V include *surveys, interviews, observation measures,* and *performance samples.* Surveys and interviews of family members, friends, co-workers, employers, and classmates can provide valuable information regarding learners' needs, goals, and preferences for curriculum content. Observation measures can be used by staff to assess the learners' progress in acquiring language and literacy. Performance samples of learners' work, such as writing samples, tape recordings of oral readings, and journals, are useful for documenting learners' language development. By using a variety of alternative approaches, staff and learners can develop a comprehensive picture of what is happening in the project and satisfy the needs of both process and product evaluation.

A Planning Process Model

Developing a quality instructional program and evaluation design requires a thorough planning process involving the collaboration of staff members and adult learners. Figure 1 illustrates each of the steps of the process. The model is heuristic; that is, it is shown as an idealized guide for planning. In actual practice, the tasks are not always implemented in sequence. Sometimes steps are skipped and then gone back to. At other times, steps are addressed simultaneously. Most important, the steps are interdependent; that is, what happens in implementing one step influences activities in other steps.

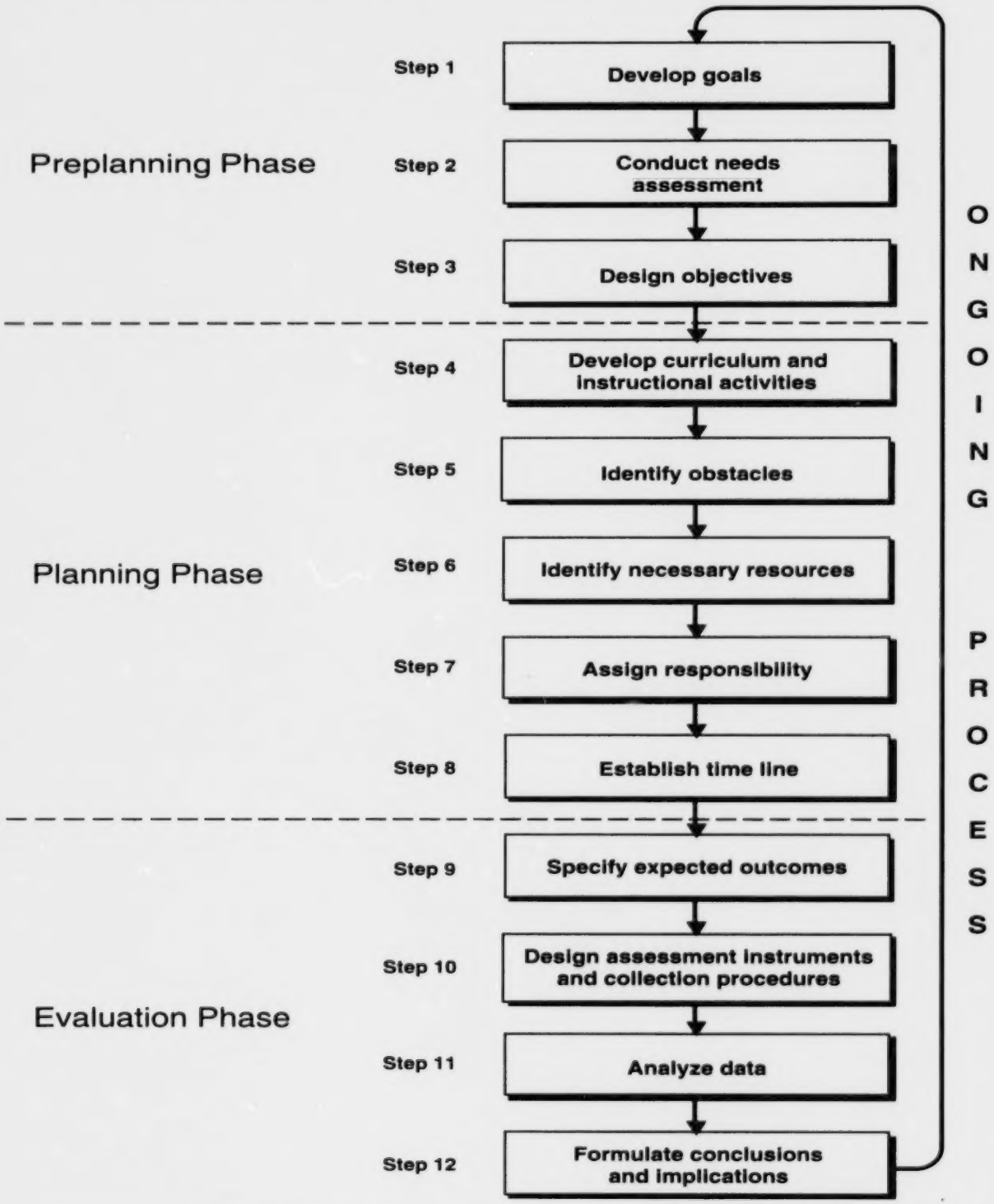
Developing a quality instructional program and evaluation design requires a thorough planning process involving the collaboration of staff members and adult learners.

The planning process is cyclical; the knowledge gained by implementing one step is used to inform decisions related to other steps. The implementation of the steps should be a collaborative effort between staff and adult learners. Figure 1 illustrates that effective planning is not a one-time effort, but rather a series of activities that occur throughout the life of the project. By continuously examining the needs of the learners, staff, and the community in general, staff members can create instructional activities, assessment strategies, and evaluation procedures that are highly responsive to the learners and the conditions under which the project is being implemented.

Staff and learners need time to organize and implement the steps in the model. Although the entire process cannot be implemented fully in any one year, staff and learners should work through as many steps as possible, implementing fully when feasible, and laying the groundwork for other steps that might be addressed later.

Figure 1

STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS MODEL



Effective planning is not a one-time effort, but rather a series of activities that occur throughout the life of the project.

The process is designed to give staff and learners a blueprint for continuously collaborating to design and refine their project. Visualizing the entire process enables staff to schedule time and resources for dealing with each step. For example, teachers may devote class time to activities in which learners would discuss the relevance of instructional content to their personal goals and the extent to which they believe they are making progress. Ideally, staff members should be able to meet weekly or biweekly to assess and clarify goals, objectives, instructional activities, and other issues.

Staff members will benefit from planning activities that result in (1) clarifying adult learners' needs; (2) defining the dimensions of literacy addressed by the project; (3) refining curriculum content; and (4) selecting appropriate instructional methods. By establishing a consensus about the important aspects of the project, staff members can coordinate their responsibilities more successfully. They also can provide a clear orientation to new staff members and adult learners who join the project in midstream. A literacy framework becomes a useful reference for communicating the program's philosophy, goals, and procedures to others. Specifying clear goals and objectives helps participants collaborate to create a consistent, coherent instructional program that responds to learners' needs and supports their continued growth. A collaborative planning process enables participants to identify changes that will improve the project based on the collective resources of staff and learners.

Applying the Planning Process Model

Collaboration is facilitated when individuals establish a trusting, supportive relationship with each other. Staff members need to model the cross-cultural sensitivity that is essential for developing positive relationships. Positive interpersonal relations can be enhanced by creating activities designed to build a cooperative spirit among staff and adult learners. Team building exercises are useful for developing participants' ability to recognize team members' contributions and realize the value of helping and receiving help from one another. Developing cooperative skills will improve the participants' ability to implement the planning process model. (For more on improving human relations in the work place, see Johnson, 1987.) Chapter IV contains procedures for assessing adult learners' group participation skills.

Positive interpersonal relations can be enhanced by creating activities designed to build a cooperative spirit among staff and adult learners.

The following are descriptions of each step of the planning process model and examples of how the step has been addressed by FELP projects in California. These descriptions represent only some of the many approaches that are possible for designing, implementing, and evaluating family literacy projects.

1 Develop the goals of the project.

Goals are broad, general statements of the intent, purpose, or expected outcome of a project. Usually the goals of a literacy project

are derived in part from the purposes of the program as delineated by the ESEA Title VII statute for FELP.

Goal statements help staff members design the needs assessment activities that take place in Step 2 of the planning process. In the initial stages, goals are tentative, because they may need to be adjusted based on what the staff learn from assessing the needs of the learners. As the project is implemented (Steps 4-12), the staff may need to adjust further the goals of the project.

The goals represent the focus of the project and reflect the choices that the project staff have made within the flexibility of the funding source and the needs of the participants as anticipated by the staff.

The goals developed by the FELP project at the Santa Clara County Office of Education (1989-92) address the major purposes of FELP; that is, developing the participants' English language skills and the parents' ability to help their children succeed in school. The following goals were designed to reflect the unique interests of the learners and staff in the Santa Clara area (*Proceedings from the Family English Literacy Seminar,* 1991, p. 62).

1. Assist LEP Hispanic and Southeast Asian parents and family members to achieve literacy and competence in the English language;
2. Provide parents and family members with knowledge of techniques designed to assist their children in developing literacy skills in English and appreciation of reading;
3. Involve parents and family members in direct instructional and support roles related to their children's skill development and participation in English literacy; and
4. Support parent/community/school communication and the development of parents' leadership, advisory, and advocacy roles.

The goals represent the focus of the project and reflect the choices that the project staff have made within the flexibility of the funding source and the needs of the participants as anticipated by the staff.

2 Conduct the needs assessment.

Assessing the needs of prospective learners is a vital step in the planning process. During this step, staff obtain valuable information about the learners, their families, and their communities. The first phase of the needs assessment usually is conducted as part of the proposal for funding. The questions asked of learners are based on the goals that staff intend to pursue in response to the funding guidelines. After receiving the grant, staff members need to conduct more in-depth needs assessments, the results of which may cause staff to clarify or modify the goals.

The first phase of the needs assessment is usually conducted as part of the proposal for funding.

Before the FELP project in the Lincoln Unified School District (1990-93) designed its objectives and instructional activities, staff administered a survey (alternative assessment instrument) to a representative sample of the Southeast Asian families that the district intended to serve. (Chapter III contains a detailed explanation of the needs assessments that were conducted by staff at Lincoln.) The results of the survey indicated that the parents wanted services to be available near their apartment complex. Therefore, the staff established a family

education center in a vacant apartment unit located in the middle of a two-block area of five apartment complexes occupied by Cambodian and other Southeast Asian families.

The staff of the FELP project at the National Council of La Raza (1988-91) used writing samples produced by project participants as part of its needs assessment. The adult learners wrote the sample in Spanish or English, depending on their language proficiency. The staff used a *holistic scoring* technique to score the learners' writing. The samples provided important information for refining objectives, developing instructional activities, and generating *baseline data* for comparing and evaluating changes in the learners' writing ability at a later time in the program. Chapter IV contains more information about using writing samples for assessment.

Information gathered through needs assessment activities can help staff to design project objectives (Step 3) and develop curriculum and instructional activities (Step 4).

The FELP project in the Whittier Union High School District (1990-93) used data obtained from the academic records of the adult learners' children to design objectives and instructional activities. These data enabled staff to identify high school students who were experiencing academic problems and to design project activities that would help parents improve their children's academic performance. Information gathered through needs assessment activities can help staff design project objectives (Step 3) and develop curriculum and instructional activities (Step 4).

3 Design instructional objectives.

Objectives can help staff specify changes or outcomes that learners may experience in their language abilities, parenting strategies, cultural adaptation, or other important areas as a result of the instructional program. Some objectives may deal with clearly observable outcomes such as speaking and writing; others, however, may specify changes that are more difficult to see such as self-confidence, group participation, or literacy awareness. Each objective should include procedures and instruments that can be used to measure the extent to which the objectives are being achieved. (Chapter I contains additional information about objectives.)

Each objective should include procedures and instruments that can be used to measure the extent to which the objectives are being achieved.

Initially, objectives are based on information collected during the needs assessment. As the planning process unfolds and more information is collected from the learners, objectives and related assessment instruments may need to be refined. Ultimately, objectives are determined by what the learners need, what the staff are prepared to teach, and what is possible to achieve within the time and budget constraints of the project.

The following are examples of objectives that use alternative, nonstandardized assessment measures (*Family English Literacy Program: ESEA Title VII Application*, 1991, pp. 26-29).

1. By the end of each project year, participants will improve their receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing)

skills at least one level as assessed by an observation measure and writing sample. (This objective contains four subobjectives that specify outcomes and measurements for listening, reading, speaking, and writing.)

2. By the end of each project year, participants will increase by at least four the number of literacy activities they do with their children as assessed by individual interviews.

Objectives are determined by what the learners need, what the staff are prepared to teach, and what is possible to achieve within the time and budget constraints of the project.

4 Develop the curriculum and instructional activities.

Instructional activities are based on the learners' needs and the project's goals and objectives. For example, the staff of the FELP project in the Parlier Unified School District (1989-92) responded to the large numbers of Spanish-speaking families in the district by designing activities in which parents use original stories from Latin American countries for story telling activities with their children.

The FELP staff of the Fremont Unified School District (1988-91) organized instructional activities for parents that used children's stories from the district's adopted list of core literature. By becoming aware of the literature that their children studied in school, the parents gained confidence in talking with their children about school activities. Chapter IV contains more suggestions for developing instructional activities and designing ongoing assessment instruments and procedures.

5 Identify obstacles.

"Forewarned is forearmed" accurately describes the value of anticipating potential obstacles to planned activities. Knowing about possible impediments helps staff and learners anticipate and refine future activities by modifying plans and elaborating strategies to overcome hurdles. At a coordination meeting of 14 California FELP projects in December 1990, participants identified obstacles they faced with regard to 1) recruitment of participants; 2) maintaining enrollment; and 3) staff recruitment and training. Next, they shared strategies they had found successful in addressing these problems. The following are results of their discussions (*Proceedings from the Family English Literacy Seminar*, 1991, pp. 15-20).

1. Obstacles to recruiting participants:
   a. Schools have incomplete or inaccurate lists of limited-English-proficient students.
   b. Printed flyers advertising classes are ineffective because parents may not be literate in English or their native language.
   c. Attending school may be a new experience for parents who have little or no education in their native countries.
   d. Parents are reluctant to visit the school because they are not knowledgeable about the educational system.
   e. Students who qualify for the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program may not participate in the project if classes do not meet GAIN requirements.

f. Some parents face cultural barriers that restrict their participation. For example, in some cultures, wives cannot attend class without their husband's permission.

g. Child care is not available.

2. Obstacles to maintaining enrollment:

a. Participants must move frequently because of seasonal jobs.

b. Participants' overtime work prevents them from attending classes.

c. Responsibilities at home prevent regular attendance—for example, child care, family problems, and transportation.

d. Participants may become discouraged if the project activities do not meet their needs.

3. Obstacles to staff recruitment and training:

a. Staff who are knowledgeable about adult ESL, parenting, and language-minority issues are in short supply.

b. Qualified bilingual teachers are in limited supply.

c. Some staff are reluctant to work in the evening.

d. Budgets are insufficient to support staff salaries.

By identifying obstacles and discussing possible solutions, participants can focus on alternatives to consider for overcoming significant barriers to improving their projects.

6 Identify resources needed to address each objective and obstacle.

Staff need to identify the resources necessary to address objectives and obstacles. Resources include personnel, time, materials, and funding. This step helps staff analyze the scope of the project and establish realistic expectations for what can be accomplished in the project.

7 Assign staff members responsibility for designing and implementing each task or activity.

Accountability is especially important in collaborative efforts to ensure that each team member contributes.

When staff members are responsible for particular tasks, they become stakeholders who regard their contributions as important factors in the success of the project. Accountability is especially important in collaborative efforts to ensure that each team member contributes.

8 Establish a time line for each task or activity.

Because family literacy projects offer a broad array of services and activities over an extended period of time, staff members need to specify a time line to ensure that all steps of the planning process are implemented. Steps 6–8 are essential because they provide the parameters for developing each activity.

Examples of Steps 6–8.

When staff members of the FELP project located at California State University, Sacramento (1986-89) identified resources needed to improve the project (Step 6), they determined that having their own curriculum would significantly facilitate the learners' achievement of

the project's objectives. During the first year of project implementation, the staff compiled curriculum content and activities that the learners especially liked. Each staff member assumed a specific role for designing, compiling, and evaluating the curriculum materials (Step 7). The adult learners also had responsibilities such as identifying content they believed was important to learn and giving feedback regarding the effectiveness of learning activities. After deciding on the scope of the curriculum, the staff created a time line for developing the curriculum for the project (Step 8).

During the second year, the staff field tested and refined the curriculum materials. By the end of the third year, the curriculum was printed and used at all sites in the project. Titled *Parenting Curriculum for Language Minority Parents* (Holt, 1988), the text was developed in English, Chinese, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Spanish, and Vietnamese. A teacher's activity guide also was developed. The curriculum is an example of how staff can collaborate with learners to identify and develop resources that enhance the implementation of the project. The success of the effort was dependent on (1) staff members' having an intimate knowledge of the adult learners' needs; (2) staff and adult learners' sharing responsibilities for tasks; and (3) staff members' adhering to a time line for completing the tasks.

The adult learners also had responsibilities such as identifying content they believed was important to learn and giving feedback regarding the effectiveness of learning activities.

Parenting Curriculum for Language Minority Parents has also been a valuable resource for FELP project staff of the Stockton Unified School District (1988-91). Staff used the curriculum to improve parents' knowledge of such topics as parent-child communication, child development, discipline techniques, and the U.S. educational system. Each topic, however, was addressed only after the staff and learners agreed that it was important.

Staff of the FELP project in the Ravenswood City Elementary School District (1989-92) found that computers were an important resource for enhancing the implementation of their project (Step 6). The computers were used to supplement the literacy instruction the parents received in Spanish and English. For example, beginning-level learners composed stories on the computer, and advanced learners created their own resumes and developed a project newsletter. The computers became a resource for motivating parents to participate in project activities and for strengthening the relationship between parents and their children.

9 Specify expected outcomes.

During this step of the planning process, staff and learners identify the type and amount of change or growth they expect at the end of a given time period. This step represents what the project participants regard as success in the project. Growth can be expressed in terms of academic growth (for example, a specified increase in positive ratings on a project-developed reading test); social, cognitive, or affective development; organizational skills; or parenting skills. The outcome statements are more detailed than the objectives that were developed

Staff members and learners may want to develop outcomes that are short term (the ability to explain one's needs to an apartment manager) and long term (obtaining a teaching job).

earlier in the process (Step 3). They should specify the assessment measures to be used and the amount of growth that seems realistic. Staff members and learners may want to develop outcomes that are short term (e.g., the ability to explain one's needs to an apartment manager) and long term (e.g., obtaining a teaching job).

10 Design assessment instruments and procedures to collect data.

Staff and adult learners need to identify the data that will document progress toward attaining the outcomes specified in Step 9. For example, taking a *frequency count* of the number of times children read to parents per month might be an indicator of parents' encouragement of children's literacy development.

Outcomes may be assessed with various types of assessment strategies. For instance, an outcome such as growth in listening comprehension could be assessed through a single measure such as a standardized test, an interview, an observation measure, or performance sample. However, an outcome that deals with reading strategies that an adult learner uses to obtain information might be assessed through a combination of an interview, an observation measure, and a performance sample to fully capture all the strategies that the reader might be using. To gather data accurately, it is important that a match be established between the type(s) of assessment and the nature of the outcome. A variety of alternative procedures for assessing specific outcomes are discussed in Chapters III, IV, and V.

11 Analyze data.

Data become meaningful when they are analyzed. Various approaches can be used for data analysis. Staff may want to represent assessment data in numerical scores to generate percentages, means, and standard deviations. On the other hand, staff may wish to describe learner outcomes by summarizing assessment results in narrative form. To interpret and analyze data effectively, staff members need to understand thoroughly the outcomes that were assessed. Chapter V contains detailed suggestions for analyzing data.

12 Formulate conclusions and implications.

The results of the data analyses should be reviewed by staff and learners to determine the extent to which they accomplished what they set out to do.

The results of the data analyses should be reviewed by staff and learners to determine the extent to which they accomplished what they set out to do. That is, were the objectives of the program attained? Were the outcomes specified in the objectives realistic? Were they matched to the learners' needs? Should instructional activities be changed? Should objectives be modified? This step provides staff and learners with the opportunity to make what are often hard choices about the project. What has been successful? What needs to be strengthened? What ought to be eliminated? What needs to be changed?

As shown in Figure 1, the decisions made in Step 12 should be used to refine the activities associated with Steps 1, 2, 3, and others.

Conclusions about the outcomes of project activities should influence the development of objectives that will be pursued in the future.

Conclusions about the outcomes of project activities should influence the development of objectives that will be pursued in the future. That is, the planning process model represents a cycle of interdependent steps. When any aspect of the program is changed, all of the related aspects should be reviewed to determine if they also need to be modified. Chapter V provides a variety of strategies for using and reporting data.

Designing Alternative Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation: Where Do You Begin?

The preceding section presented a process for planning, implementing, and evaluating a family literacy project. The model emphasizes the importance of collaboration among the staff members and learners for creating a successful project. The planning process also underscored the value of alternative assessment procedures for helping staff ascertain the needs of adult learners and the progress they are making in the project.

The final section of this chapter presents suggestions for implementing the planning process model and related alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation. Implementing the model involves deciding (1) who will be involved in the planning process; (2) how the planners will work together; and (3) what issues the planners will address in assessment and evaluation.

Members of the Planning Team

A planning team made up of staff members and learners will help ensure that decisions are based on a thorough understanding of the needs of all participants.

The first and perhaps most important step in initiating a comprehensive planning process is to decide who will be involved in the process. A planning team made up of staff members and learners will help ensure that decisions are based on a thorough understanding of the needs of all participants. The project evaluator might also be included in the planning team to assist the staff and learners with designing the evaluation.

To the extent possible, all instructional staff should have the opportunity to participate in the planning process. Community liaisons also should participate because of their knowledge of the learners' language and cultural backgrounds. When deciding on the content of the curriculum and specifying learner outcomes, it may be helpful to include suggestions from prospective employers, teachers of the participants' children, representatives from local government agencies (for example, employment and social service offices), and staff from community colleges and universities.

Approaches to Planning

After the planning team has been formed, team members need to consider how they can work together effectively. Because of the diversity of individuals and the range of perspectives that need to be blended into a consensus, it is vital that the facilitator of the planning team be both willing and able to promote a cooperative spirit among team members. The facilitator needs to ensure that each team member's contribu-

tions are invited, expressed, valued, and integrated into the decisions that are made in each step of the planning process.

The facilitator has the responsibility of ensuring that meetings and tasks are structured so that the project benefits from the experiences of all team members. A collaborative approach to planning enables staff and learners to become more knowledgeable about each other's needs and the value of cooperation itself. According to Freire (1973), "acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables—lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe—but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context" (p. 48). Collaboration helps team members develop a sense of responsibility for helping others and the feeling of satisfaction that comes from a successful team effort. The act of planning and implementing together can provide significant opportunities for learning how to assess what one needs and how to take steps to improve one's context, whether it be at home, at school, or at work.

Because of the diversity of individuals and the range of perspectives that need to be blended into a consensus, it is vital that the facilitator of the planning team be both willing and able to promote a cooperative spirit among team members.

Issues in Assessment and Evaluation

The primary purpose of the planning team is to take the necessary steps for designing, implementing, and evaluating the project. This section presents questions that the planning team needs to answer related to designing the assessment and evaluation of the project.

1. What should be evaluated?

Staff members need to consider how they will collect data for assessing the implementation of the project (process evaluation) and the effects of the project on the learners' lives (product evaluation). To design the process evaluation, the planning team should deal with such issues as the role of the staff members and learners in planning, implementing, and evaluating the project. Other points to examine might be the extent to which the goals of the project are consistent with the goals of the learners. The planning team needs to decide what data should be collected, analyzed, used, and reported to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the project.

The planning team needs to decide what data should be collected, analyzed, used, and reported to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the project.

Product evaluation, on the other hand, deals with issues related to the effects of the project on adult learners (and their children, if the objectives of the project include children). To design the product evaluation, the most important point for the planning team to address is the specification of what constitutes success in the project. In other words, how will the staff and learners know the extent to which the goals and objectives of the project are being met? How will participants determine that learners have increased their ability to use language for various purposes or their self-confidence in working with others? What

To design the product evaluation, the most important point for the planning team to address is the specification of what constitutes success in the project.

data will be used to make these determinations? How will the data be collected?

To determine the value of collecting any piece of data, the planning team needs to clarify the purpose of the data and analyze whether the cost of collection is worth the required time and resources. For example, will the data be used to improve initial assessment; to enhance the curriculum; to show learners the progress they are making; to develop staff members' teaching ability; to document progress for outside agencies; or to improve the administration of the project?

2. When should data collection take place?

After determining what data will be collected, the planning team needs to decide when the data will be gathered. Questions to address include the following: Are the data needed before the learners enroll in the project? How many times should data be collected to show progress? Chapters III and IV contain information about the timing of initial and ongoing assessment procedures.

3. How will adult learners, staff members, the project evaluator, members of the community, and others be involved in conducting the evaluation?

The planning team needs to consider who should be involved in the evaluation, the role of each individual, and strategies for facilitating a cooperative effort.

The planning process model emphasizes the importance of collaboration in helping to ensure an evaluation design that is comprehensive and meaningful. The planning team needs to consider who should be involved in the evaluation, the role of each individual, and strategies for facilitating a cooperative effort.

4. What data collection procedures will be used?

The planning team should decide what procedures will be used to collect the data. For example, what data will be gathered via alternative instruments such as surveys, interviews, observation measures, and performance samples? How will standardized measures be used? Factors to consider in these decisions are the comparative effectiveness of each procedure in providing accurate and reliable data; resources needed for developing the procedures; staff members' knowledge or prior experience in using the procedures; time and resources necessary for collecting and analyzing the data.

5. How will staff members know that progress is being made?

Objectives and expected outcomes of the project represent the staff members' criteria for project success. For most family literacy projects, criteria include a range of outcomes such as gains in listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities; improved self-confidence; enhanced use of literacy in different contexts; increased abilities of parents to help their children in school; improved involvement of parents in their children's school activities; and greater use of community resources. Chapter IV provides examples of other learner outcomes and related alternative assessment procedures.

6. How will stakeholders and others become knowledgeable about the results of the evaluation?

One of the uses of the evaluation results is to inform stakeholders of the nature of the literacy project and the progress that the learners are making. Stakeholders may include the learners in the project, other staff members, administrators, family members, and representatives of the funding agency. The planning team should determine who needs to receive the evaluation results and how the results will be disseminated. Chapter V provides examples of strategies for reporting the results of the evaluation.

Summary

Traditional *standardized assessment* and evaluation procedures provide only some of the answers to the questions that staff and others may have about family literacy projects. The standards on which traditional procedures are based are not always tailored to the needs, goals, and characteristics of the diverse adult learners who participate in literacy projects. In contrast, alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation enable project staff to create instruments and procedures that provide highly useful and meaningful information for improving their project. When standardized and alternative assessment procedures are integrated, they can provide a more complete understanding of the literacy project—its objectives, activities, and results—and help meet the information needs of the learners, program staff, and funding agency.

When assessment and evaluation are integrated with instruction, they produce results that can be used to document success and plan improvements in the project.

To be effective, alternative approaches should be linked carefully to the needs of the adult learners, literacy framework, objectives, and curriculum content of the project. Such linkage can be achieved by using a planning model that is designed and implemented through the collaborative efforts of staff and learners. The collective commitment of all project participants to a comprehensive planning process will help ensure that assessment and evaluation activities are implemented as an integral part of planning and implementing the project. When assessment and evaluation are integrated with instruction, they produce results that can be used to document success and plan improvements in the project.

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CHAPTER III

INITIAL ASSESSMENT: FIRST STEP TO SUCCESS

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***A**ssessment** plays an important role in the successful operation of family literacy projects—from initial planning to the final stages of implementation. Initial assessment is pivotal in determining the links between instructional services and learners' needs. This chapter explores the purposes of initial assessment and examines a variety of methods and instruments that can be used to accomplish these purposes. The information in this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on initial assessment as an integral part of the planning of a successful family literacy project. The second section describes the many uses of initial assessment in the implementation and evaluation of a project.

* See the Glossary on pages 137-138 of this publication for definitions of *italicized* key terms that appear in this chapter.

Initial Assessment in Planning a Successful Project

This section focuses on initial assessment as an integral part of the planning of a family literacy project—Step 2 in the Planning Process Model introduced in Chapter II. The following issues will be addressed: (1) the importance and nature of initial assessment in the planning of a family literacy project and (2) approaches that can be used for initial assessment.

Importance and Nature of Initial Assessment

Initial assessment is important in the development of a successful literacy project because it provides program planners with the opportunity to examine the needs, desires, and goals of the potential participants. This information can be used to generate the instructional *objectives* and other aspects of the program design. Figure 1 illustrates how the results of a needs assessment influence the key aspects of the project.

Initial assessment is important in the development of a successful literacy project because it provides program planners with the opportunity to examine the needs, desires, and goals of the potential participants.

An effective needs assessment can help staff understand the needs and goals of the participants and establish the foundation for the entire project. Objectives are derived from the identified needs; activities are designed to achieve the objectives; and assessment procedures are created to evaluate attainment of the objectives. (The effects of initial assessment are illustrated in more detail in "Planning Process Model," Figure 1 in Chapter II of this volume.)

Figure 1

Influence of the Needs Assessment on the Entire Project

Needs of the Participants

Objectives (outcomes based on the identified needs) → **Program Design** (curriculum and activities designed to meet the objectives) → **Evaluation** (determination of the degree to which objectives were achieved and needs were met)

Objectives are derived from the identified needs; activities are designed to achieve the objectives; and assessment procedures are created to evaluate the attainment of the objectives.

A family literacy project should be planned on the basis of extensive information obtained about the learners. According to Weinstein-Shr (1993), project staff may wish to learn about (1) the structure and characteristics of the community in which the learners live; (2) the language, literacy, and educational background of the learners; and (3) the concerns of adults in their role as parents. The following list expands these issues and presents a wide range of information for staff to consider in designing a needs assessment:

1. Demographic information about the learners' community (for example, number of language groups, length of residency, and degree of transiency).
2. Historical and cultural backgrounds of the learners (for example, country of origin, obstacles faced in coming to the United States, family structure, and religious affiliation).
3. Information about family members (for example, average number of family members, socioeconomic level, and literacy levels in English and their native language).
4. Educational, parenting, career, psychosocial, and health needs of the parents (for example, educational background, reasons for learning English, educational expectations for children, vocational goals, and support network).
5. Educational, psychosocial, and health needs of the children (for example, educational background, language proficiency, and health history).
6. Determination of which needs are short term and which are long term (for example, the learners' psychological needs that require immediate attention versus their interest in attending college).

Other needs may be identified by consulting with teachers, administrators, service providers, and others in the community.

Approaches for Initial Assessment

Initial assessment to determine the needs of potential project participants may involve the use of *surveys, interviews,* and *focus group* discussions with community members as well as analysis of documents and literature regarding family literacy. Each of these approaches is described below, with examples of how they were carried out for a needs assessment in the Lincoln Unified School District in Stockton, California. An in-depth explanation of the process of analyzing and reporting the results of these approaches is given in Chapter V. The use of standardized tests, such as the *Basic English Skills Test (BEST)* (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982), in a family literacy project is addressed in Chapter VI.

Surveys. Surveys are effective for assessing the needs of potential project participants. The survey may consist of a written questionnaire or check list that is completed by prospective participants or administered orally by bilingual staff members to individuals in English or their native language. Responses to closed-ended

questions may be easier to tally, but open-ended questions can give staff a more complete understanding of the learners' needs. At the beginning of the planning process, a survey can be administered to a large group of individuals to create a general picture of the needs of adults and other family members who may be interested in project services.

For example, in 1990 the staff of the Lincoln Unified School District developed a survey shown in Example 1 (see page 48) to collect basic information from prospective participants regarding their need for a family literacy project. The survey addresses such issues as number of adults and children residing in each housing unit; their native language; number of adults who would like additional English instruction; preferred location and time of literacy classes; parents' need for child care and transportation; desired curriculum topics; self-assessment of English language proficiency; number of years' residence in the United States; and number of children who are enrolled in ESEA Title VII projects. To obtain more detailed information about what the participants would like to learn in the project, staff could use a survey such as the one shown in Example 2 (see page 49).

To get the most comprehensive and valid results, four bilingual staff members of the district visited 300 apartment units during a two-week period to administer the survey orally to individual residents. This instrument, and others shown in the chapter, can be administered in English or the participants' native language. The survey results indicated that the Cambodian adults living in the targeted area were especially interested in services that a family literacy project could provide. For eample, parents wanted to know how they could help their children learn Khmer and how they could volunteer in the schools. Staff also realized that the parents' limited access to transportation made it necessary to have literacy classes located near their apartments. On the basis of those findings, the staff decided to establish a family education center in a vacant apartment located in the middle of a two-block area of five apartment complexes occupied by Cambodian families. The survey also helped staff determine the most convenient times for literacy classes, the literacy needs of the prospective participants, and their related needs, such as counseling and cultural adaptation.

The survey helped staff determine the most convenient times for literacy classes, the literacy needs of the prospective participants, and their related needs, such as counseling and cultural adaptation.

A door-to-door survey such as this one is practical when the prospective participants live in a concentrated area. If families are dispersed, bilingual staff can administer the survey via telephone. Because the Vietnamese families live throughout the Lincoln district, bilingual staff used the telephone to administer an adapted version of the survey shown in Example 1. The needs of the Vietnamese families differed significantly from those of the Cambodians. Rather than attending literacy classes in their neighborhood, the Vietnamese adults preferred to go to one of the district's school sites for classes. They also indicated their desire for citizenship classes, whereas the Cambodian adults did not express this interest, a difference that

became understandable in light of other kinds of information gathered during the needs assessment process. For example, almost all the Cambodians surveyed were forced to leave their country by the Communist Khmer Rouge and looked forward to returning in the future, whereas most of the Vietnamese adults chose to come to the United States for political freedom and educational opportunity. These major differences between the two community groups highlight the crucial importance of conducting a needs assessment when planning a project.

Focus groups. Focus group discussions help staff members gather information from a large number of people in a short amount of time. A focus group discussion is conducted with small groups according to a *protocol* that focuses on specific topics, procedures, and questions. The goal of analyzing focus group data is to examine systematically the participants' comments to identify trends or patterns that recur among different individuals or groups. As part of the initial needs assessment for its family literacy project, staff of the Lincoln Unified School District conducted focus group discussions with members of the district's bilingual advisory council; potential project participants; the participants' children; and representatives of the school district, including teachers and administrators.

Focus group discussions help staff members gather information from a large number of people in a short amount of time.

Interviews. Interviews are effective for obtaining detailed information from individuals. Lincoln's staff interviewed service providers in the community, such as librarians, and visited family literacy projects located in northern California to determine how the literacy and social needs of Southeast Asian families were being addressed by various service providers and the relative effectiveness of those services. The interviews provided yet another view of the learners' needs and an understanding of the level of assistance available to meet the needs. The information also helped identify content and methodology for literacy classes and strategies for coordinating project services with other community agencies.

Interviews are effective for obtaining detailed information from individuals.

Document and literature review. Learners' needs also can be assessed by analyzing documents and literature related to family literacy. Data can be gathered from school district records, including test scores, grades, and attendance records of participants' children; welfare department statistics such as the socioeconomic status of participants; and journals, newsletters, books, and state and national reports that include information about the literacy-related needs of participants.

Staff in the Lincoln district analyzed demographic data and statistical reports regarding Southeast Asian families. For example, staff identified the number of Cambodian and other Southeast Asian families living in San Joaquin County and then

projected the number that would be residing in the district in the future. In addition, they consulted the *Report to the Congress: Refugee Resettlement Program* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1989), which indicated that the reading and employment levels of Cambodian adults in the district were significantly below the national averages for other Southeast Asians.

The combined findings from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and research reports constitute a thorough assessment of the need for a family literacy project. After gathering the information, project staff should analyze results, identify commonalities, and develop a comprehensive summary that reflects all the needs of the targeted participants. The next step is for staff to select those needs that will be the focus of the project and that can realistically be met with available resources. Funding agencies recognize that not all needs can be met by any one project and that the scope of a grant proposal should be limited and clear.

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A thorough needs assessment enables staff to address the next steps of the planning process: that is, (1) developing detailed program objectives that respond to the needs; (2) identifying the curriculum and instructional activities that will lead to the achievement of each objective; and (3) developing assessment procedures to measure the achievement of each objective and generate data for a final evaluation report (see Chapters I and II for more information on developing project objectives). Before moving on to these steps, however, staff and prospective learners should develop a consensus regarding the philosophical basis of instructional methods, curriculum content, and other aspects of the project. Time should be devoted to the development of the project's literacy framework.

Developing a Literacy Framework

Staff members in many family literacy projects have found it helpful to develop a shared understanding among staff and learners regarding key aspects of the project.

Staff members in many family literacy projects have found it helpful to develop a shared understanding among staff and learners regarding key aspects of the project. This shared understanding is referred to in Chapter II as the project's *"literacy framework."* Such a framework will facilitate discussions and decisions about the needs assessment, program design, and evaluation. Issues to discuss include (1) learners' literacy needs; (2) goals and objectives of the project; (3) curriculum content and instructional methodology; and (4) approaches for assessing and evaluating the learners' literacy development. Developing consensus on such complex issues is a challenging task, and staff and learners may vary in the extent to which they are able or willing to collaborate to reach common ground. It is important, however, for all participants to make an ongoing commitment to work together and to draw on each other's expertise.

As general issues become resolved, staff and learners can pursue more detailed aspects of the project, such as the following:

1. Role of literacy in the learners' daily lives.
2. Relative importance of the goals and objectives of the project.
3. Curriculum content and instructional methodologies, including the use of the learners' native language and English in the project.
4. General design of the assessment and evaluation procedures.
5. Strategies for ensuring that the project will be dynamic, flexible, and responsive to the learners' needs.

It is important for the staff to validate the learners' native language within the literacy framework. Staff members need to support the learners' continued use and development of their native language for improving their literacy and strengthening their family. The learners' literacy experiences in their native language should also be analyzed and considered when designing the instructional program. Standardized proficiency and achievement tests are available in various languages and may be helpful in assessing the participants' native language proficiency and educational background. Alternative approaches such as a writing sample may also be useful. Depending on the learners' needs, family literacy projects may provide (1) opportunities for further literacy development in their native language; (2) activities in which learners acquire challenging content through their native language; and (3) strategies for using learners' native language to support their children's development. A native language literacy program is especially helpful in giving learners successful schooling experiences before they have to adjust to an all-English environment. Many literacy projects also report that instruction in native language literacy facilitates the learners' acquisition of English and enhanced self-esteem (E. P. Garza, personal communication, May 14, 1993).

Staff members need to support the learners' continued use and development of their native language for improving their literacy and strengthening their family.

An Expanded View of Literacy

Any assessment of literacy-related needs should address the social contexts in which language and literacy are used. Literacy occurs everywhere in the adult learner's world: at home, in the work place, at school, and throughout the community. Furthermore, the very nature of literacy goes beyond communicating meaning through speaking, reading, and writing. As suggested by Eisner (1991), literacy can be considered "the ability to encode or decode meaning in any of the forms used in a culture to represent meaning" (p. 11). Language, according to Eisner, is just one form of literacy; meaning is also conveyed through music, dance, and visual forms.

Literacy occurs everywhere in the adult learner's world: at home, in the work place, at school, and throughout the community.

The importance of Eisner's expanded paradigm of literacy became apparent to Lincoln Unified's staff when the results of the needs assessment survey (Example 1) revealed that although the majority of the Cambodian participants never attended school in their native country and could not read or write in their native language (Khmer), they were experts at communicating meaning through other media, such as painting, music, classical dance, and wood carving. By

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recognizing the participants' lifelong achievements and their unique levels of literacy, staff were able to create a program design that included activities to enhance the learners' self-esteem and build on their abilities. For instance, their program design included activities in which adult learners shared their areas of expertise (for example, native cuisine, folk dance, music, and sewing) with others. In developing the instructional program, it is important to build on what learners are already doing with literacy. A successful needs assessment will reveal learners' successes with literacy as well as their needs for expanding their uses of literacy.

A successful needs assessment will reveal learners' successes with literacy as well as their needs for expanding their uses of literacy.

Initial Assessment in Implementing a Successful Project

This section will describe the integral role of assessment in successfully implementing the project and refining the objectives, curriculum content, and instructional activities. Initial assessment is important in the implementation of any project because it allows project staff to (1) reshape and refine their literacy framework; (2) obtain useful information about the learners during initial intake; and (3) establish important baseline data for assessment and evaluation.

Refining the Literacy Framework

A project's literacy framework should be synchronized with the needs, goals, past experiences, and cultural values of the participants. To ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the literacy framework, the staff can use survey results to guide them in the early stages of implementing the project. For example, the results of surveys can be used to identify curriculum content and align project goals and objectives with learners' needs, interests, and past literacy experiences. Administering surveys also has the effect of publicizing the availability of literacy classes and attracting learners to the project.

A project's literacy framework should be synchronized with the needs, goals, past experiences, and cultural values of the participants.

During the initial stages of implementing the family literacy project at Lincoln Unified, staff visited individual apartments to administer a parent survey (Example 3, see pages 50-51) orally in Khmer to prospective participants. This needs assessment was a follow-up to the survey conducted with Example 1. In addition to providing important data about the participants and the community, the survey enabled staff members to develop an in-depth awareness of the personal and educational needs and goals of the Cambodian families. The parent survey contains open-ended questions designed to elicit comprehensive responses. Administration of the survey helped staff and learners begin to build a bond of mutual trust and respect that is essential to the success of a family literacy project.

Another way to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the literacy framework is to conduct focus groups with learners at the beginning of the project and at regular intervals throughout implementation. During the focus group activities, staff can check the learners'

own assessment of their progress and obtain their input regarding the relevance of the instructional program.

Establishing an Intake Assessment Procedure

The second purpose of initial assessment during the implementation of a project is to provide the staff with intake data useful for several purposes: meeting the needs of individual learners, developing appropriate curriculum content and instructional methodology, and placing learners in appropriate instructional contexts. During this phase of initial assessment, staff can collect background information on actual project participants, including proficiency in English and their native language, previous educational experiences, and length of residency in the United States. Instruments for collecting basic intake information are shown in Examples 4 and 5 (see pages 52-54).

Because they are often the learners' first in-depth experiences with the project, intake procedures become part of the foundation for establishing a good working relationship between staff and learners.

Because they are often the learners' first in-depth experiences with the project, intake procedures become part of the foundation for establishing a good working relationship between staff and learners. Therefore, intake procedures need to give learners a positive introduction to the project and provide staff with useful information for planning instructional activities. Staff members can help learners feel comfortable during intake by employing appropriate cross-cultural strategies and using the learners' native languages.

Most family literacy projects no longer rely solely on standardized tests for obtaining intake assessment data. Alternative approaches, such as interviews and writing samples, can provide staff with meaningful, highly personalized insight into the learner's background. The interview is a versatile assessment approach for obtaining many kinds of information and can range in length from a five-minute informal exchange to an elaborate two-hour session consisting of "an array of questions and activities designed to engage adults in self-exploration of their literacy practices and abilities" (Lytle, Belzer, Schultz, & Vannozzi, 1989, p. 59).

Alternative approaches, such as interviews and writing samples, can provide staff with meaningful, highly personalized insights into the learner's background.

Auerbach (1992, pp. 117–18) developed an abbreviated list of Lytle et al.'s interview questions according to categories of information about prospective learners. The following are some examples from each category:

Students' background

- Where are you from?
- What is your native language?
- Do you have family here?

Employment

- Did you work in your native country? What kind of work did you do?
- Do you work here?

- Do you do work that you are not paid for (for example, child care and community service)?

Education

- Did you go to school in your native country?
- Do most people in your native country go to school?
- Did your parents go to school?

Conceptions about literacy

- Do most people in your native country know how to read and write?
- How is reading taught?

Reading

- Do you like to read? Why? Why not?
- Do you read at home? What do you read? When do you read?
- What languages do you read?

Writing

- Do you like to write? Why? Why not?
- Do you write at home? What do you write? When do you write?
- What language or languages do you write?

Support systems

- What do you do when you have trouble reading or writing something?
- Does anyone help you? Who?
- Do you help anyone with reading and writing? Who?

Auerbach emphasizes that in order to make the interviewee feel as comfortable as possible, the interviewer should be ready to conduct the interview in the native language if necessary. Furthermore, to create a nonthreatening atmosphere for prospective learners, interviewers should avoid taking notes during the interview. Important information or summary comments should be recorded after the interview. Interviewers may need to be trained in the use of effective interpersonal communication techniques so that a positive climate is established for the interview. Chapter V includes more information on the effective use of interviews.

Interviewers may need to be trained in the use of effective interpersonal communication techniques so that a positive climate is established for the interview.

Lytle et al. (1989) and Auerbach (1992) suggest that, in addition to direct questions, interviews may include opportunities for learners to explore their abilities to read and write in their native language and in English. A reading sample might be used during the interview to assess the learner's reading ability. For example, an adult learner could be presented with a variety of reading materials in both languages: newspapers, story books, labels from food, greeting cards, rental agreements, letters from school, or prescription labels. Learners then could be asked to select items they would like to read while staff assess their reading ability. For an assessment of writing ability in

their native language or in English, learners might be asked to produce writing samples as shown in Example 6 (see pages 55-56). The writing samples may be scored holistically because the staff is interested at this point in assessing the learner's overall writing ability. *Holistic scoring* yields a single numeric value (usually between one and six) given to a writing sample as a whole. Chapter IV contains other suggestions and instruments for assessing reading and writing skills.

Another practical approach to intake assessment is to use some time during initial instructional activities to obtain information from learners that can help staff members make decisions about placement, curriculum content, and instructional activities (Auerbach, 1992). For example, during an introductory lesson, staff could include a writing exercise in which learners are given such writing prompts as these: *Describe a favorite place in your country. Describe a favorite food. Explain why you are happy (or not happy) about living in the United States.* The responses could provide staff with valuable information about the learners' previous experiences, current needs, and language abilities.

Information obtained from writing samples can help staff members develop insight into learners' initial writing ability and place them in appropriate instructional settings. A series of at least three writing samples is useful for determining where to place learners in a multi-level program. Staff may want to ask participants to write about selected topics in their native language as well as in English. The samples can be kept in a *portfolio* for comparison with learners' work later in the project. For learners who have not yet learned to write, staff members can transcribe stories that learners tell to staff members or other learners in their native language or in English.

Information obtained from writing samples can help staff members develop insight into learners' initial writing ability and place them in appropriate instructional settings.

Reading proficiency also can be assessed during regular class activities. Project staff can provide various reading materials in the learners' native language and in English, such as stories, newspapers, poems, recipes, and personal letters. Learners can then choose an item and read it to the class. For more in-depth assessment, staff members can use a similar procedure with an individual learner while other staff members work on different activities with the rest of the class.

Collecting Baseline Data

The third purpose for using initial assessment procedures in the implementation stage of a project is to collect *baseline data* that establish a starting point regarding a learner's literacy development, parenting experience, knowledge of community resources, self-esteem, confidence, interaction with children, and other outcomes that the staff would like to assess. Some family literacy projects use standardized tests to establish baseline data. If such formal assessments are used, learners may need a few days to feel comfortable about being in the project before they are tested.

Alternative approaches such as surveys, interviews, and reading and writing samples, are especially useful for establishing baseline

data because they can be designed according to the objectives and curriculum of the project. Samples of instruments that can be used as pre- and posttests are shown in Examples 7 and 8 (see pages 57-59). These instruments can be administered to learners in English as well as in their native languages.

Summary

Assessment and evaluation are not procedures tagged onto the responsibilities of project staff members simply to satisfy the interests of a funding agency or other stakeholders. Rather, they are important strategies for identifying learners' needs and abilities at the initial stages of a family literacy project and for ensuring the successful planning and implementation of the project. Sensitivity to and awareness of the needs, literacy levels, goals, and attitudes of students, whether they are adult learners, adolescents, or children, are essential if learning and personal growth are to occur.

Sensitivity to and awareness of the needs, literacy levels, goals, and attitudes of students, whether they are adult learners, adolescents, or children, are essential if learning and personal growth are to occur.

The project evaluator is an important contributor to the assessment process. The evaluator needs to work closely with project staff to develop instruments and procedures for initial assessment. The evaluator can be helpful in designing instruments that are *valid* and *reliable* and are linked to project objectives.

Chapter IV of this document provides a detailed description of instruments and procedures for assessing ongoing progress, and Chapter V explains how the results of initial and ongoing assessment procedures can be collected, analyzed, used, and reported for various purposes. *Annual evaluation reports* that combine the results of formal and informal, qualitative and quantitative, and authentic and standardized measures will provide a comprehensive, credible picture of the project-level success achieved by all participants in a family literacy project.

Acknowledgment

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Example 1

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Name | Telephone ( )

Address

Native Language

1. How many adults live in your apartment? 1. _____
2. How many children in your apartment attend Lincoln Unified School District? (Identify individual schools by name) 2. _____
3. How many adults currently attend GAIN program English classes? 3. _____
4. Where do they attend classes? (e.g., Delta College, adult school) 4. _____
5. If there are adults living in this apartment who are *not* attending GAIN English classes, would they attend GAIN English classes if they were held in your apartment complex? 5. _____
6. How many men would go? 6. _____
7. How many women would go? 7. _____
8. Would these adults agree to attend class four hours a day, five days a week? 8. _____
9. Would they need to have someone outside the family take care of their children during class? 9. _____
10. How many children need child care? 10. _____
11. Should class be held in the morning or in the afternoon? 11. _____
12. Is it a good idea for us to try to get our classes approved for GAIN, or should we have our own literacy program? 12. _____
13. If we cannot get our English classes approved for GAIN, would you attend anyway? 13. _____
14. How many hours per day should classes be held? 14. _____
15. How many days per week should classes be held? 15. _____
16. What would you like to learn? 16. _____
    a. English
    b. How to get a job
    c. How to be a good parent
    d. How the schools operate
    e. How to become a citizen
17. What is your level of English language skills?
    a. Oral skills: (1) Low (2) Medium (3) High 17a. _____
    b. Reading and writing skills: (1) Low (2) Medium (3) High 17b. _____
18. How long have you been in the United States? 18. _____
19. How many children in your apartment are participating in ESEA Title VII programs? 19. _____

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Example 2

OMS–FELP NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

English

Oral Skills: Where do you want to use better English?

- __ grocery store
- __ department store
- __ doctor's office
- __ drug store
- __ bank
- __ post office
- __ children's school
- __ telephone
- __ library
- __ immigration office
- __ welfare office
- __ neighbor/friend's home
- __ social security office
- __ apartment office (manager)
- __ restaurant
- __ flea/farmer's market
- __ temple/church
- __ other

Reading Skills: What do you want to read better?

- __ school reports
- __ labels
- __ forms
- __ driver's manual
- __ income tax forms
- __ signs
- __ bills
- __ newspapers
- __ schedules (bus, train)
- __ advertisements
- __ school letters
- __ business letters
- __ checks (from jobs)
- __ job applications
- __ other

Writing Skills: What do you want to write better?

- __ notes to children's schools
- __ schedules for children
- __ fill out forms
- __ business letters
- __ checks
- __ other

Parenting: *What do you think is important to learn in a parenting class?*

- __ how to discipline children
- __ how to talk/share feelings with children
- __ how to help children feel good about themselves and their culture
- __ how to help children adjust at school
- __ good nutrition
- __ health (nutrition, personal hygiene, healthy habits)
- __ making the home and play areas safe
- __ monitoring home activities, including the use of television
- __ other

Family Literacy: *What do you want to do more of to promote literacy at home?*

- __ ask children to read to you
- __ take children to the library
- __ tell stories to children
- __ read to children
- __ encourage children to do homework
- __ talk to children's teachers
- __ encourage children to write
- __ visit children's school
- __ other

Example 3

PARENT SURVEY

Name | Telephone

Address

Native language | Native country

Can you read in your native language? | Can you write in your native language?

Year of arrival in U.S. | Single mother | Single father | Married

	Name of Children	*Grade*	*Name of School*
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

1. Are you presently attending a GAIN class? Yes No Where? _____
2. What time is best for you to attend FELP classes? morning afternoon evenings
3. What days are best for you to attend class?

   Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday
4. What do you need to help you attend classes? Child care Translator

   Friend to come with you Other
5. What would you like to learn?

   Apartment management (how to work with the apartment manager, get something repaired, ask about rent, look for an apartment)

   Citizenship (how to become a U.S. citizen)

   Communication with legal authorities (attorneys, police, legal support, legal aid, neighborhood watch)

   Education (registration, how to notify the school of illness, talk to the teacher/principal, visit your child's school, understand grades and progress reports)

   English as a second language (oral communication, reading, and writing)

Health (immunizations, hygiene, medical and dental check-ups, how to talk to the doctor and dentist, fill out medical forms)

Mathematics (money, banking, numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division)

Nutrition (common foods in the United States, healthful eating)

Parenting/child rearing (developmental stages, suggestions on how to help your child at home, how to communicate effectively with your child)

Safety (emergencies, car seats, fire prevention, water safety, first aid)

Other _____

_____

_____

6. What kind of help do your children need? _____

_____

_____

_____

Example 4

APPLICATION FOR FELP CLASSES

Name (Last) (First) (Middle)

Address (Street) (City) (State) (ZIP Code)

Telephone number ( ) Birth date Male Female

Native country Date of arrival in U.S.

Did you go to school in your country? Yes No How long?

Do you read in your native language? Limited Fluent

Do you write in your native language? Limited Fluent

What other languages do you speak?

What other languages do you read?

What other languages do you write?

Have you taken English classes before? Yes No How long?

Where?

Are you: Married Divorced Widowed

Single Separated

Name of husband/wife?

Number of children Ages

Health problems

Social Security number

Alien registration number

Office use only—Please do not write below this line.

Date application received:

Date of test/s:

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Example 5

REGISTRATION FORM

(To be completed by staff about family members participating in the project.)

Family name _____

Father's name _____
First Last

Mother's name _____
First Last

	Name of Children	*Name of School*	*Grade/Room No.*
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Address _____ Telephone ( )

What country do you come from?

How long have you been in the United States?

How long have you been in Solana Beach?

What level of education did your father complete?

What level of education did your mother complete?

Did your children go to school in your country?

Father's work

Mother's work

Are you enrolled in any other ESL class? Yes No

Do you have books at home? Yes No

How many books do you have at home? 1–10 11–20 21–39 More than 40

Are they in English or Spanish? English Spanish Both

Do you have a library card? Yes No

Do you have a television in your home? Yes No

Registration Form *(continued)*

Do you watch television programs in English or Spanish? English Spanish Both

Do you listen to radio programs in English or Spanish? English Spanish Both

Do you read newspapers in English or Spanish? English Spanish Both

Do you correspond with your family in Mexico? Yes No

Does the father:

- Understand spoken English? Yes No
- Speak English? Yes No
- Read English? Yes No
- Write English? Yes No
- Read Spanish? Yes No
- Write Spanish? Yes No

Does the mother:

- Understand spoken English? Yes No
- Speak English? Yes No
- Read English? Yes No
- Write English? Yes No
- Read Spanish? Yes No
- Write Spanish? Yes No

Do the children:

- Understand spoken English? Yes No
- Speak English? Yes No
- Read English? Yes No
- Write English? Yes No
- Read Spanish? Yes No
- Write Spanish? Yes No

What problems have you encountered in the United States that you would like to discuss in class?

Example 6

INTAKE ASSESSMENT FORM

Name (Last) (First) (Age)

Write numbers 1–27.

1

27

Write the alphabet.

A

Z

Read the sentences and circle the correct word in the box.

1. He go at went to work.
2. She am is are thirty-five.
3. How old am is are you?
4. I go going went to buy food yesterday.
5. We came come came from to the United States five years ago.
6. They has have got five children.
7. I has had have been studying English for six months.

PRIMARY LANGUAGE WRITING SAMPLE

Write about the picture in your native language.

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Developed by Ann Howard and Ponra Kith

Example 7

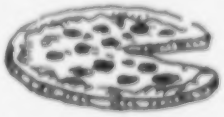
PRE/POST TEST: COOKING AND NUTRITION

Circle the foods that are healthy snacks.

candy | apple | doughnut | peanuts | soda

carrots | orange | milk | potato chips | cookies

Circle the correct answer.

1. What's this?	2. What's this?	3. What's this?	4. What's this?
			
doughnut	cake	cheese	hamburger
pie	cookies	sandwich	salad
hamburger	hot dog	meatloaf	pizza

Make an X on the foods that are not healthy snacks.

Adapted from Holt, G. D.(1988). *Parenting curriculum for language minority parents*. Sacramento: California State University, Cross Cultural Resource Center.

Example 8

PRE/POST TEST: THE U.S. SCHOOL SYSTEM

Circle the one correct answer for each of the questions below.

1. The report a school sends home to tell about a student's progress in school is called a
   A. Cinch notice
   B. Emergency card
   C. Report card
   D. Absence report

2. The top person in an elementary school is called a
   A. Librarian
   B. Principal
   C. Teacher
   D. Vice-principal

3. High school ends at grade
   A. Six
   B. One
   C. Nine
   D. Twelve

4. A student checks out books from the
   A. Cafeteria
   B. Playground
   C. Office
   D. Library

5. When a child is too sick to go to school, he or she should
   A. Stay home and play outside
   B. Rest inside the house
   C. Watch TV all day
   D. None of these

6. What things are needed for a child when registering for school?
   A. Birth certificate
   B. Shot records
   C. Physical examination
   D. All of the above

Answer the following questions true (yes) or false (no).

7. Children need more sleep than adults. _____
8. A parent cannot help a child in school if the parent does not speak English. _____
9. Schools do not want the parents to help their children with school work. _____
10. Teenagers go to high school. _____

If you have a child in school, answer the following questions.

12. What grades are your children in?

13. What schools do your children attend?

14. Where are your children's schools located?

15. What are the names of your children's teachers?

CHAPTER IV

ASSESSING PROGRESS: ARE WE PROGRESSING?

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To judge how well a *family literacy project** is working on a day-to-day basis, staff members need to take the educational pulse of the program periodically and assess learners' progress. Progress *assessment* can help staff determine the extent to which their instructional efforts lead to beneficial results and have positive effects on the learners' lives. Assessments also give participants a sense of accomplishment by showing them that they are making headway toward attaining their goals (Wrigley, in press). To be effective, progress assessments need to include several components:

1. Baseline data that show what participants know and what they can do.
2. Indicators of progress or descriptors of what counts as success.
3. Methods to gather information on a continuous basis.
4. Plans for synthesizing and analyzing the data that are collected.

* See the Glossary on pages 137-138 of this publication for definitions of *italicized* key terms that appear in this chapter.

This chapter shows how staff can develop progress indicators based on the *objectives* of their *project* (see Chapters I and II for more on objectives). Six sets of instructional activities are presented, each of which focuses on particular learner outcomes and provides examples of alternative approaches for assessing the learners' progress toward the outcomes. These activities include the following: (1) helping learners and staff get acquainted; (2) linking project activities with family life; (3) reading to do; (4) writing to do; (5) building self-esteem and taking literacy beyond the classroom walls; and (6) developing literacy through language experience.

This chapter illustrates how learners' performances in these activities can be assessed with a variety of approaches such as *observation measures, interviews,* and *performance samples.* The examples of *alternative assessment* instruments presented in this chapter are not intended as ready-to-use assessment tools. Staff members should adapt the instruments and procedures based on the unique characteristics and objectives of their project. Before presenting the activities and instruments, a rationale will be provided for using alternative approaches to assess learners' ongoing progress.

Characteristics of Alternative Approaches to Assessing Ongoing Progress

Conventional assessments often use pre- and posttests to compare how much learners know before and after an instructional unit or employ standardized measures that may not reflect the form and content of the program. Alternative assessments can go one step further. Rather than focusing only on knowledge and skills, they seek to show changes in learners' attitudes, social interactions, and communication patterns that may be attributed to their participation in the program. In contrast to many *standardized assessments,* alternative approaches can link instructional content with assessment. In addition, alternative assessments are often participatory, involving learners as partners in the assessment process.

Alternative assessments can focus on *the way learners use* language and literacy as opposed to *how much they know about* grammar, phonics, or spelling.

Linking Curriculum with Assessment

Alternative assessments can focus on **the way learners use** language and literacy as opposed to **how much they know about** grammar, phonics, or spelling. For example, a traditional test might assess whether students know irregular verb tenses, can find words that rhyme with "cat," label the parts of the body, or answer comprehension questions about a paragraph. An alternative assessment, on the other hand, might seek to examine how well a learner can explain a problem, read a report card, or write a note to a neighbor. Alternative assessments also can be used to report on the role that literacy plays in learners' lives and to document the life changes that take place as learners become involved in family literacy.

Alternative assessments are particularly useful with a language and literacy curriculum that emphasizes meaning over form and

communication over structure. Such assessments are also effective for learner-centered approaches to teaching *English-as-a-second-language (ESL)* literacy. One recent research study on successful programs and promising practices defined a learner-centered approach to ESL literacy as "supporting language-minority adults with little English and little formal education in their efforts to understand and use English in its many forms (oral and written, including prose, document, and quantitative literacy), in a variety of contexts (family, community, school, work), so that they can reach their fullest potential and achieve their own goals (personal, professional, academic)" (Wrigley & Guth, 1992, p. 7).

Because a learner-centered curriculum tries to be responsive to the participants' changing needs and goals, learner-centered assessment also needs to be dynamic and flexible. Such assessment should be capable of capturing incidental learning and unforeseen problems and of demonstrating the extent to which program objectives have been met. A collaborative effort among teaching staff, learners, and those evaluating the project helps to ensure effective planning and implementation of alternative assessment (see Chapter II for a detailed description of the planning process).

The next section is the first of six sets of instructional activities that illustrate a variety of alternative approaches to assessing ongoing progress. Linking instructional activities with assessment provides a multifaceted view of the learners' involvement and progress in a project.

During the early stages of a project, it is important for learners to have opportunities to discuss the role that literacy plays in their lives.

Helping Learners and Staff Get Acquainted

During the early stages of a project, it is important for learners to have opportunities to discuss the role that literacy plays in their lives. Through a series of exploratory activities, learners may identify their goals for literacy, describe the ways they use literacy at home and in the community, explain their hopes and dreams for their children, and talk about their interests in acquiring literacy in their native language and their goals for learning English. This section presents activities and assessment procedures that can be used at the beginning of the instructional program. These activities also provide opportunities for teachers and learners to get to know each other during the initial stages of the project. In addition, they present a chance to discuss how the program can meet learners' needs and help families move toward their goals. (Chapter III provides initial assessment strategies for obtaining information for planning and developing instructional objectives and curriculum content.)

Surveys and questionnaires can be used just before classes begin to assess the learners' needs. After instruction is underway, additional information can be gathered effectively in group sessions in which learners discuss the roles that English and literacy play in their daily lives. These sessions may result in literacy inventories that reflect when, where, and for what purposes learners engage in certain types

To develop useful learner-centered assessments, staff members need to gain and maintain the trust of the learners so that they feel free to share their experiences, ideas, and aspirations with their peers.

of reading and writing; for example, is reading religious material more important to them than reading the newspaper? Activities that invite learners to talk about how they use literacy and what they want to be able to do with literacy should occur at regular intervals throughout the project. Such activities will help learners express their goals more clearly and identify ways in which literacy can enrich their lives. To develop useful learner-centered assessments, staff members need to gain and maintain the trust of the learners so that they feel free to share their experiences, ideas, and aspirations with their peers.

Small-group and pair activities are especially helpful in allowing staff to (1) note how learners interact with each other; (2) observe the learning strategies they use; (3) gain insights into the learners' communication skills and *literacy practices* (in English and in their native language); and (4) recognize the skills and abilities that learners bring to class.

What to Do

To find out more about the learners and help them get to know one another, staff members can use (1) grids in which participants match information about a classmate with the person's name: for example, "Who has two children and comes from Vietnam?"; (2) maps and pictures from magazines that allow learners to talk about their native countries; (3) photographs brought from home that enable learners to talk about their families; and (4) language experience stories in which learners tell about a significant event such as, "My first day in the United States."

Learners also can get acquainted by interviewing each other. Gillespie (1990) suggests that teachers cut pictures in half; ask learners to choose half a picture out of a box; find the person who has the other half; and interview that person. Interview topics could include questions about the learners:

1. Interests, likes, and dislikes.
2. Background knowledge, skills, and occupation.
3. Reasons for enrolling in the project.
4. Family life and parent-child activities.
5. Experiences with schooling in their native country and the United States.

Follow-up activities can address such questions as, "When and where do you use English and why?"; "When do you use your native language?"; "What are your educational goals for yourself and for your children?". Learners also can be asked about the role of literacy brokers in the community—individuals who act as cultural guides to U.S. society and help newcomers negotiate paths through the maze of U.S. bureaucracies and other obstacles (Weinstein-Shr, 1990). Of particular interest for family literacy might be the role that children play in mediating language for their parents and grandparents. Staff can use such investigations to create in-class discussions about cross-cultural differences in communication, schooling, or home health

care. These discussions could then lead to instructional activities that provide opportunities for sharing feelings and ideas and for acquiring other knowledge and information.

Assessment Strategies

Activities in which participants interact, learn together, and teach each other provide staff with opportunities to assess what learners know, what role literacy plays in their lives, when and where they use English and their native language, and what educational values they hold. Collaboration among participants helps create a community of learners and allows staff to assess learners along various dimensions of literacy:

Collaboration among participants helps create a community of learners and allows staff to assess the learners along various dimensions of literacy.

1. Levels of self-esteem and confidence in interacting with others.
2. Ability to understand spoken and written English.
3. Ability to express ideas orally and in writing.
4. Patterns of native language use at home and in the community.
5. Knowledge about cross-cultural differences in institutions, services, and life-skill areas.
6. Levels of independence and degree of transfer of skills and knowledge beyond the classroom, including changes in behavior desired by participants.

Staff members who are uncertain about which of these dimensions to focus on initially can design an observation measure for each learner that captures information in each of the areas until categories worth pursuing begin to emerge. Or staff can create a simplified version that would focus on fewer areas. Example 1 (see page 79) is an observation measure that can be used to obtain basic information about the learners. The information obtained can be used for the following:

1. To generate *baseline data* for monitoring learners' progress over time.
2. To provide information for staff members to share regarding individual learners and to detect common patterns in the learners' responses to classroom activities.
3. To create classroom activities that address learners' needs.

Staff members can use questions such as the following to guide their discussion and to develop *descriptors* for various levels of progress:

1. What differences do we see between advanced and lower level learners in reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities?
2. What evidence of coping skills do we observe? What do we know about the strategies that learners use to solve problems and communicate in English even though they have only minimal English and are just barely literate?
3. How much do individual learners already know about laws, regulations, and institutions that affect their community (for example, schools, health care providers, and social service agencies)?

4. What evidence do we have that learners are applying in their personal lives what we are teaching in the project?
5. What are the characteristics displayed by independent learners? How are such learners different from those who are overly dependent on their peers or the teacher?

By developing descriptors of learners' behavior at various stages of development, staff are able to identify changes in learners' performance over the course of the project. Staff members can continue to add meaningful information to learner profiles as the project is implemented. When assessment and instructional activities work in tandem, learners' needs and their progress are illuminated, enabling staff to gain clearer insights into how the project can be tailored more appropriately to the learners.

Figure 1 contains comments that staff members might write about learners in the learner profile (see Example 1, page 79).

By developing descriptors of learners' behavior at various stages of development, staff are able to identify changes in learners' performance over the course of the project.

Linking Project Activities with Family Life

This section shows examples of how instructional activities, goal setting, and assessment can be linked with family life. First, learners work together to create some kind of joint project. Next, parents talk about the kinds of activities they do with their children at home and discuss how these activities can support children in their own learning. Parents then decide what they would like to do with their children during the next class sessions. Finally, parents talk about the time they spent with their children and what their experiences have meant to them.

What to Do

Initial program activities need to encourage participants to learn from and teach each other by observing and doing. For example, staff members, parents, and children can work and play together to create collages, holiday greetings, announcements, or birthday cards. Staff might start by showing some interesting examples and by demonstrating a particular technique for creating the materials. While they work with paper and scissors, participants learn the English names for colors, shapes, and actions such as cutting, folding, and tearing.

In subsequent activities, participants share information, describe their materials, or teach each other a particular technique. Similar activities can include making paper airplanes, origami (paper folding), or party decorations. (For an example of a lesson on making and playing traditional instruments, see Quintero & Huerta-Macías, 1990.) Next, parents can discuss some of the activities they do with their children at home and talk about the kinds of reading and writing they do in their native language or in English.

Figure 1

Examples of Comments for the Learner Profile/Observation Card

Communication skills

Listening comprehension

Felicia still looks a bit overwhelmed and confused when we discuss things or when I give directions for a particular task. She seems to understand more when I talk to her directly, especially when I ask her about her family. She does not seem to understand very well when we venture into topics that go beyond her family, her home, or the town that she came from (Guadalajara).

Reading

Felicia seems eager to read. Whenever I hand out the language experience stories that the class has written, she immediately gets started. However, she seems to get stuck easily whenever she encounters an unfamiliar word or a difficult phrase. She is able to answer simple comprehension questions about a story we have talked about in class but has difficulty with new readings. She seems quite ready to link her own experience to other people's stories and her responses to the story focus on recounting the facts presented. I am hoping she will talk about herself more and see the connections between her own life and the experiences of other students in the class. Felicia picks up magazines during our free reading periods and leafs through them but she does not seem engaged in any of the texts.

Coping strategies and problem solving

Although Vuth scored fairly low on our standardized placement test, he seems to cope pretty well in class. He is able to figure out what to do when I assign a task by watching other students or asking an occasional question. He is willing to put pen to paper when I ask the class to write (although his written English is very difficult to understand), and he eagerly looks through the books and magazines we have in the classroom. Although he has a friendly smile, his tone is still rough at times, especially when he asks for something. ("Teacher, give me book" is a typical request.)

Content knowledge and understanding of institutions, services, and life skills

Marta seems interested in how the community works, but she has very little knowledge of the services that are available to her (she did not know she could get free prenatal care at the clinic). A friend brought her to class, and she has only been in California for two months. She does not know the name of the school her children attend or the names of their teachers. She does know that 911 is for emergencies but thought that all she has to do is dial and the police will come right away to the right address (she was surprised to hear that she would have to explain the nature of the problem). She did not know that she could ask the operator for help in Spanish.

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Assessment Strategies

Activities that involve parents and children working together offer staff a starting point for discussing the social interaction among family members and for understanding the literacy practices used in the home. To learn more about the participants' families, staff can develop questionnaires in which parents, working individually, in pairs, or in groups, list the activities they do at home with their children.

Initial program activities need to encourage participants to learn from and teach each other by observing and doing.

Example 2 (see page 80) is an illustration of a questionnaire for generating a list of activities that parents and children do together. The list generated by the learners can become baseline data for documenting changes over time in parent-child interactions (see Example 3, page 81). The assessments shown in Examples 2 and 3 could be conducted in the learners' native language or in English.

In ensuing activities, staff members can provide information to parents about learning strategies used by children and present examples of how parents can support their children's learning at home. For example, parents can give children opportunities to observe others, learn new things with siblings, ask questions, or discuss cause and effect relationships. Using a questionnaire such as the one shown in Example 4 (see page 82), parents can discuss activities they consider useful for helping their children.

Next, parents can identify the kinds of activities they plan to undertake with their children and the frequency with which they might conduct each activity (see Example 5, page 83). These activities could become part of an individualized plan that helps learners document progress toward meeting their own goals and the objectives of the project. Parents could use a questionnaire such as Example 6 (see page 84) for reporting the activities they try with their children and for determining to what extent they have met the goals in their plan.

Activities that involve parents and children working together offer staff a starting point for discussing the social interaction among family members and for understanding the literacy practices used in the home.

Examples 4-6 can be adapted to meet the specific purposes of a family literacy project. For example, the complexity of the English vocabulary and structures used in the instruments could be tailored to the learners' ability. In addition, the instruments could be translated and administered in the learners' native language. Some projects also might have staff members or learners use the instruments for individual interviews in English or the native language.

Reading to Do

Beginning learners need opportunities to deal with different kinds of texts and cope with a variety of forms of English. Storytelling and language experience activities show how sentences are connected. To focus on one word or sentence at a time, learners can read signs, symbols, and instructions that appear in their environment everyday.

The activities in this section are designed to help participants develop their receptive skills of listening and reading. The focus of the

activities is on introducing beginning learners to reading through environmental print (signs and symbols in the community) and imperative print (messages that tell citizens what to do and not to do). An observation measure is presented for assessing listening and reading abilities.

What to Do

Field trips can be used to give adult learners opportunities to operate a variety of machines such as those for making photocopies or obtaining soft drinks and change. Participants also can learn how to use a public telephone or operate an automatic teller machine.

Working in pairs or small groups, learners discuss the instructions for the machines and practice what is required to operate them. Learners might use a Polaroid camera for taking pictures of instructions they find hard to understand. During a field trip, they also can write examples of imperative print, such as **Exit**, **Stop**, and **No Turn on Red**. Staff members could select several sets of the instructions for additional practice in class.

During classroom activities, learners can identify the machines they found particularly useful, interesting, or difficult to operate. They might decide which instructions they would like to study further in literacy activities such as reading simple imperatives, matching instructions with appropriate machines, or putting instructions in sequence. For example, the sequence of instructions for using a public telephone would be (1) lift receiver; (2) listen for the dial tone; (3) deposit 20 cents; and (4) dial the number.

Follow up. Learners can develop language abilities related to operating other machines such as an audiotape recorder, camera, videocassette recorder, three-hole punch, subway ticket machine, or computer. As learners become more proficient, they might work with longer and more complex instructions for such tasks as assembling simple toys, making crafts, following recipes, or completing job application forms.

Assessment Strategies

As learners try to figure out how things work by reading or listening to instructions, staff members can observe their reactions and assess the learners' reading and listening skills. Similar activities should be repeated throughout the instructional cycle to determine whether reading and listening are becoming easier and to compare learners' skills at the beginning of the course with their abilities toward the end. Instructions can be given orally to test listening comprehension or in writing to assess reading skills. In both cases, the instructions used for assessment should be somewhat familiar to learners so they do not become overwhelmed or discouraged by the task. Example 7 (see page 85) is an illustration of an observation measure for assessing listening and reading abilities.

To develop a consensus on the meanings of the descriptors used (**With ease**, **With some support**, etc.) and to establish the reliability of the observation measure, staff members should use the instrument with adult learners at similar levels of proficiency under a variety of circumstances. With practice, learners can develop their own understanding of the meanings of the descriptors and begin to evaluate their own performance. At more advanced stages, they can evaluate their peers and give constructive feedback about their performance.

Writing to Do

Writing instructions for others to follow provides learners with the opportunity to communicate ideas to an audience. Because instructions require clear language and a logical sequence, they represent an effective way for learners to write down what they know and to ensure that their readers understand.

This section presents cooperative activities in which participants teach and learn from each other by talking about a particular skill or ability they possess. The activities work well in a multilevel class, because they give less proficient learners a chance to develop knowledge by observing and responding nonverbally while more advanced learners enjoy the special challenge of teaching others. An observation measure is presented for assessing learners' speaking and writing abilities.

With practice, learners can develop their own understanding of the meanings of the descriptors and begin to evaluate their own performance. At more advanced stages, they can evaluate their peers and give constructive feedback about their performance.

What to Do

In cooperative activities, participants realize that each member of the group can be a teacher and a learner. To introduce the activities, staff members can ask parents what they teach their children and what their children teach them. It may be interesting for adult learners to talk about what they learned from their parents. Learners might also discuss how they help their neighbors and friends. These activities allow staff members to identify skills participants have, such as repairing a flat tire, preparing a home remedy for a sick child, fixing a broken window, getting rid of stains, or braiding long hair.

During these activities, staff members can validate knowledge learners possess such as knowing how to find a bilingual doctor, where to get free legal advice, how to talk to a social worker, and where to find a video store that stocks films in the learners' native language. Staff members might make a list of skills represented in the group and ask learners to decide which ones they would like to develop further. Staff can also discuss the possibility of bringing in outside speakers from legal aid and public health agencies, the Red Cross, or the community relations unit of the police department. Presenters can talk about topics such as fighting an eviction notice, practicing safe sex, giving blood, or protecting a home against burglaries.

Staff members can ask participants to choose a particular task that interests them such as making tamales or a fruit salad, sorting coupons to use at the grocery store, demonstrating first aid, playing the kazoo, making popcorn, putting up a bulletin board, or taking Polaroid pictures. Group members might work together to write instructions for others to follow. After discussing and demonstrating the instructions in small groups, individual learners can demonstrate the task to the class using both verbal and nonverbal cues to illustrate their points. To evaluate the learners' speaking and writing abilities related to giving instructions, staff members can use an observation measure similar to the one shown in Example 8 (see page 86).

In cooperative activities, participants realize that each member of the group can be a teacher and a learner.

Assessment Strategies

The observation measure shown in Example 8 demonstrates how an instrument can be developed for specific purposes in a project. In this case, the instrument was designed to measure learners' progress in improving their speaking and writing abilities related to giving instructions for particular tasks.

Another assessment strategy would be to put each learner's written instructions in a *portfolio* for comparison with future writing samples. Copies of the instructions could be given to other learners to try to follow. Staff might use selected sets of instructions for subsequent literacy activities such as fill-in-the-blank or cloze exercises, completing sentences that require longer phrases, unscrambling words in sentences, sequencing instructions, and matching instructional steps with pictures.

For intermediate learners, the types of activities described here can be extended to teach functional literacy skills such as filling out school registration forms, understanding immunization records, and telephoning the school for information. (For other examples of literacy activities for intermediate students, see Holt's *Parenting Curriculum for Language Minority Parents: Teacher's Activities Guide*, 1988.)

Staff members also can design writing activities for the whole class. For example, in preparation for a party or a holiday, learners might work together to prepare a meal, provide entertainment, explain the significance of the day, write invitations, and make decorations for the room. The activities could then be written up, either as work plans, narratives, or items for a class newsletter. The written work can become the basis for further language and literacy development.

Building Self-Esteem and Taking Literacy Beyond the Classroom Walls

The alternative assessment instruments discussed thus far focus on language use; that is, they seek to assess how well learners can perform specific language-related tasks. Although these instruments can document changes in language abilities, they do not provide

information on affective factors such as self-confidence, self-esteem, or motivation. Nor do the instruments provide data that would indicate how well learners work together or to what extent they transfer knowledge gained in the classroom to their lives beyond the school.

Affective factors deserve the attention of staff members because of the importance of self-confidence and self-esteem in influencing not only the learners' language development but also their general level of success in adapting to the cultural challenges they face at home, in the community, and at work. Research has shown that learners who interact with and use others as resources make significantly greater gains in learning than do students who work alone (Kagan, 1986; McGroarty, 1993). Similarly, studies in cognition demonstrate that language and literacy development is increased if learners can link classroom knowledge to real life contexts (Anderson, 1988; Anderson & Pearson, 1988; Smith, 1975).

In preparation for a party or a holiday, learners might work together to prepare a meal, provide entertainment, explain the significance of the day, write invitations, and make decorations for the room.

What to Do

Project staff can use a variety of activities to help learners develop self-esteem and to improve their interaction with others. Activities should enable learners to demonstrate the knowledge, insights, and abilities they have developed in responding to real life challenges. The following are activities that staff might try in their project, or they may want to design their own.

1. Case studies in which learners are presented with a familiar problem and asked to brainstorm possible solutions. For example, a case might involve a daughter who wants to play on the volleyball team, but the mother, a single parent, is worried about her daughter's being away from home for practice and out-of-town games.
2. Situations that illustrate a significant economic, social, or cultural issue, such as lack of affordable housing, street crime, and racial, ethnic, and language-related discrimination. The situations, sometimes called *codes*, can be presented through short readings, dialogues, and pictures. They can provide starting points for the learners to discuss their concerns and to brainstorm solutions. Codes are based on problem-posing pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire. (See Wallerstein, 1983 for similar activities.)
3. Simulations and role plays in which learners play themselves in situations such as performing a cultural dance, participating in a parent-teacher conference, or dealing with uncooperative landlords.
4. Projects such as developing a class biography, producing a resource guide for newcomers to the community, organizing activities that help their children learn their native language, or producing dictionaries and pictionaries in English and the learners' native language.
5. Lists and charts of individual accomplishments that are posted on classroom walls. Learners use their own words to describe achievements related to language, literacy, and learning that they are proud of.
6. Language experience stories in which learners tell of the struggles in their lives and celebrate their successes in becoming biliterate and bicultural. (For examples of learner-generated stories, see Weinstein-Shr, 1992.)

Research has shown that learners who interact with and use others as resources make significantly greater gains in learning than do students who work alone.

Assessment Strategies

The observation measure shown in Example 9 (see pages 87-88) can be used to (1) record changes in learners' confidence; (2) document levels of participation in pair or group activities; and (3) show transfer of skills to actual life experiences. By recording information about the three affective areas in one chart, staff members can analyze relationships among the domains. For example, the data might indicate that as learners become more confident, they participate more freely and transfer the knowledge gained in class more readily to real life. Results of the measure might also illustrate that levels of self-confidence are related to levels of participation, as in the case of learners who collaborate more freely as they become more self-confident. When interpreting the results, staff members need to be aware that factors outside the project also may influence the learners' level of self-confidence.

Developing Literacy Through Language Experience

One of the most challenging tasks faced by literacy project staff is introducing nonreaders to literacy. Adults who are developing literacy in English as well as in their own language need a great deal of time and special support so they can comprehend printed materials and express their views in writing. This section gives examples of activities designed to facilitate learners' literacy development. Instruments and procedures are presented for holistic assessment of writing samples.

When interpreting the results, staff members need to be aware that factors outside the project also may influence the learners' level of self-confidence.

Adults who are developing literacy in English as well as in their own language need a great deal of time and special support so they can comprehend printed materials and express their views in writing.

What to Do

Many useful strategies are available for helping learners acquire literacy. An effective approach is to begin by helping learners read words they already know, such as their own names, the names of their children, traffic signs, store marquees (e.g., K-Mart), and product logos (e.g., Coca-Cola). Activities based on environmental print can provide an excellent starting point for developing literacy.

For teachers who believe that instruction in phonics is an important part of introducing learners to literacy, phonics activities can be integrated easily into authentic reading and writing activities. For example, to help her students move from oral language to literacy, Dean (1992) suggests using popular songs as a starting point for literacy activities. She uses the Mexican song "La Bamba" to help learners associate sounds with print and to demonstrate that many syllables in Spanish consist of similar letter combinations: for example, **la**: bam-**ba**; **ma**-ri-ne-ro.

Another promising way to introduce reading is the Language Experience Approach (LEA). LEA represents both a philosophy of teaching and learning and a method for connecting oral language to literacy. It involves a staff member or another learner transcribing a

story that a learner or a group of learners has created based on an individual or shared experience. The stories are then read aloud and shared with group members. After the learners become comfortable with the content and language, the stories can provide the basis for group discussions, additional reading and writing activities, or in some cases, language practice. Because the language used in these stories comes from the learners, the vocabulary is familiar, the stories are reflective of the learners' experience, and the sentence structures are comprehensible. Some literacy projects evaluate the learners' progress in acquiring language by assessing the LEA stories they generate. (See also Taylor, 1993.)

Assessment Strategies

Language experience stories can be used as starting points for assessing reading and writing for learners at lower levels of proficiency. Other assessment strategies may include interviews that ask readers to talk about what they like to read and how they derive meaning from print. Also helpful are surveys in which learners are asked to list the kinds of reading and writing they do in the course of their daily lives, for example, making grocery lists, checking television viewing schedules, reading the newspaper, observing traffic signs, and scanning school notices.

As learners new to literacy make progress in the project, assessment may focus on showing how the range of literacy materials increases as learners become more efficient readers and writers. At the end of an instructional cycle, even beginners may be able to read signs and ads as well as simple notes, cards, stories, and poems. By observing reading behavior and asking learners to describe the strategies they use for deriving meaning, staff can document increases in the learners' range of literacy practices.

Language experience stories can be used as starting points for assessing reading and writing for learners at lower levels of proficiency.

Learners also will increase their range of writing abilities. Slowly, they will write letters with more ease and require less effort to get words down on paper. For example, a learner may move from writing her name in big letters on a name card to signing a birthday card. As learners become more comfortable expressing their ideas, their writing may show a strong voice that evokes the reader's emotion. A mother may write "My children far away. I very sad. I wish we together." Although the structure of these sentences is not grammatically correct, the piece has a focus, shows logical coherence, and clearly communicates the loss the writer feels.

Two scoring methods can be employed for scoring learners' work: holistic and primary trait. *Holistic scoring* provides an overall view of the learners' current writing ability. Scales may range from four point up to ten point. For example, a rating of four on a four-point scale could mean a more than adequate response in terms of organization, clarity, content, and mechanics; three, an adequate response; two, less than adequate; and one, very inadequate.

As learners new to literacy make progress in the project, assessment may focus on showing how the range of literacy materials increases as learners become more efficient readers and writers.

Primary trait scoring analyzes specific dimensions, or traits, such as voice, sentence structure, conventions (e.g., capitalization and spelling), and grammar. For any one writing assignment, several traits or just a small number can be measured. Each trait can be scored on a four- or six-point range. The learners' score can be based on individual traits or on the sum of the scores for all of the traits. Example 10 (see page 89) is an example of a primary trait scoring rubric.

Regardless of whether holistic or primary trait scoring is used, staff members need to be trained in the scoring procedure. Training should involve staff members working together in a group to score some writing samples and then score samples individually. Individual staff members' scores should agree before they start scoring their own learners' work. Periodic checks should be made to ensure that staff members continue to agree on what constitutes a two or a three, for example, and on what scores should be given to specific writing samples.

Example 10 is an assessment instrument designed to evaluate writing samples according to the dimensions of (1) authenticity, voice, and engagement of the reader; (2) focus, organization, and development; and (3) sentence mechanics and language. The example was adapted from an instrument that appears in Soifer et al. (1990). Chapter V presents strategies for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data collected with Example 10.

Two scoring methods can be employed for scoring learners' work: holistic and primary trait.

Because progress in writing is often difficult to observe from day to day, staff may want to keep a collection of learners' work in individual portfolios. Writing samples for the portfolio may be chosen and evaluated at key points during the instructional cycle. At specified intervals (for example, once every three weeks), staff members might identify several examples of learners' writing that were produced during that time period. Staff could share their impressions as they review the writing samples. Staff members might invite learners to one-on-one conferences in which learners select what they regard as their best or favorite piece of writing and talk about the progress they have made in the project.

Assessing the progress of new readers and writers. Assessing the progress of beginning readers and writers can be a tricky undertaking. Three things need to be kept in mind: First, because reading and writing involve thinking processes that are not always observable, teachers need to be open to surprises and develop strategies for finding out how learners are thinking as they read and write. Second, reading and writing development are not linear processes; rather, literacy develops in fits and spurts. As a result, a learner might appear to be fairly high on a reading and writing scale one week and lower the next. Third, learning how to read and write is a complex process that requires special skills and strategies—for example, being able to connect meaning to print and understanding that writing represents speech.

Because progress in writing is often difficult to observe from day to day, staff may want to keep a collection of learners' work in individual portfolios.

Because reading and writing involve thinking processes that are not always observable, teachers need to be open to surprises and develop strategies for finding out how learners are thinking as they read and write.

In assessing the progress of beginning literacy students, it is important for staff to be aware of the cyclical and recursive nature of literacy development.

Literacy also involves subskills such as understanding the relationship between letters and sounds (phonics) and forming the letters of the alphabet. Another important literacy skill is sometimes referred to as *making meaning*—that is, the ability to make sense of written words or to express thoughts in writing. The check list shown in Example 11 (see pages 90-91) is designed to assess the meaning making strategies associated with literacy.

In assessing the progress of beginning literacy students, it is important for staff to be aware of the cyclical and recursive nature of literacy development. Staff members should not be surprised if a new reader understands quite a bit of one story but becomes confused or stymied by another. Similarly, a writer may feel inspired by a particular topic, yet have nothing to say on a different theme.

Understanding some of the factors that help or hinder comprehension and writing proficiency helps staff assess literacy progress. The learners' background knowledge, goals, and interests influence how well they are able to deal with a particular text. Thus, staff need to observe and listen to the learners to get a sense of the kinds of topics they may want to read and write about. Similarly, staff should provide a wide range of literacy activities (for example, listening to songs, labeling photographs, illustrating a story, or reading about others in the class) so they can respond effectively to the participants' different learning strategies. Staff also should look at many different examples of what learners are able to read and write to get a complete picture of the learners' literacy development.

The check list shown in Example 11 provides descriptions of some of the strengths that learners exhibit as they go about making meaning in reading and writing. It illustrates some of the learners' characteristics as they move from being relatively unfamiliar with literacy to becoming independent readers and writers. Not all learners will exhibit all the descriptors in the instrument. As staff members read and write with their learners, they should check the descriptors that characterize a particular learner. They can then compare the check lists of several learners to determine how the learners as a group are developing from emerging to independent literacy. Staff members also can compare the check lists of several learners and summarize the data at the end of an instructional cycle.

Summary

Adult learners have their own reasons for coming to class, only some of which have to do with acquiring English and developing literacy skills. Effective assessment approaches need to take into account the learners' needs and goals and develop ways of showing them that they are making progress.

Alternative assessment approaches enable staff to create project-based instruments and involve learners in developing the curriculum and designing the evaluation. The instruments may include observation measures, *protocols* for interviews and *focus groups*, learner

profiles, and performance samples. Staff will want to use and field test these instruments to measure progress reliably over time. The data gathered with the instruments can then be aggregated into summary formats and, where appropriate, quantified so that the information can be used to answer a variety of questions about the project.

Staff members who use alternative assessments that are project based and learner focused have access to more *valid* and useful information than that which can be obtained from most standardized tests. To improve the use of alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation, project staff face the challenge of defining their vision of success and developing instruments that capture the changes that take place as language-minority adults and their children become involved in family literacy.

Effective assessment approaches need to take into account the learners' needs and goals and develop ways of showing them that they are making progress.

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Example 1

Learner Profile/Observation Card

Type of assessment: Observation measure.

Purpose: To record information about the knowledge, skills, and strategies that learners possess and the level of confidence they display in interacting with each other and to collect anecdotal evidence that shows the extent to which participants are using the information gained in class in their lives outside the classroom.

Method: Open-ended charts allow teachers to take notes on what learners do and say.

Learner Profile/Observation Card

Date	Teacher
Unit	Class

Learner's name

- *Communication skills*
  listening and reading
  speaking and writing

- *Coping strategies and problem solving*
  linguistic
  nonverbal/social

- *Content knowledge*
  institutions
  services
  life skills

- *Levels of confidence*
  self
  one-on-one
  small group
  large group

Example 2

Questionnaire

Type of assessment: Self-assessment; questionnaire.

Purpose: To identify literacy practices in the home and record parent-child interactions. Information provides baseline data for documenting changes over time.

Method: A list of activities is generated as part of whole-group or small-group discussions or after learners interview each other. If learners are not proficient in English, the activity can take place in their native language. In cases where the learners are not literate, the teacher or a literate partner can record responses.

Prompt to learners: Parents and children can do many things together. They go to the park on Sunday, go fishing, cook food, clean the house, go hiking, watch TV, work in the garden, or look at magazines. In many families, parents help their children with homework or check their assignments. What do you do together with members of your family?

Example 3

Self-Assessment Instrument

Type of assessment: Self-assessment of literacy activities by frequency count.

Purpose: To identify family activities that learners engage in at home. The instrument can be used for generating baseline data and documenting changes during the implementation of the project.

Prompt to learners: You do many things together as a family. Tell us how often you do these activities. (Be sure to list any activities you do that are not on the list.)

Family activity	*Almost every day*	*Once or twice a week*	*Several times a month*	*Once or twice a month*	*Seldom*
Go to the park					
Watch TV together					
Cook or clean house together					
Fix things that are broken					
Go fishing					
Do homework together					
Look at a book or magazine					
Play games					
Work in the garden					
Go hiking					
Attend cultural events					
Other activities					

Example 4

Questionnaire

Type of assessment: Self-assessment; open-ended questionnaire.

Purpose: To record home literacy events and activities that parents regard as essential and to gain insights into educational values and opinions about learning.

Method: As part of whole- or small-group discussions or through pair activities, learners discuss their views of how children learn and how parents can help their children learn.

In my opinion, these activities help children learn:

Talking about (for example, field trips and birthday parties)

Teaching children to (e.g., ride a bicycle and bake cookies)

Helping children with (e.g., writing a letter and doing math problems)

Asking children questions about (e.g., their friends, favorite teacher, and personal problems)

Telling children that (e.g., everyone makes mistakes and doing homework is important)

Example 5

Self-Assessment Instrument

Type of assessment: Self-assessment; frequency count.

Purpose: To set personal goals and develop an individualized plan for documenting progress.

Prompt to learners: Based on the home literacy activities identified in the questionnaire (Example 4), list activities that you plan to undertake with your children and indicate how often you might do each.

Family activity	*Almost every day*	*Once or twice a week*	*Several times a month*	*Once or twice a month*	*Seldom*
My children and I plan to . . .					
go to the library					

Example 6

Questionnaire

Type of assessment: Self-assessment; open-ended questionnaire.

Purpose: To record literacy events and learners' accomplishments related to literacy and to compare goals in the learners' individualized plans with actual activities.

Method: Learners talk about the kinds of activities they did together with their children and discuss the literacy events that have taken place. Each learner or a literate partner records responses. At key points in the cycle the list is compared with the learner's individualized plan. The plan is then discussed anew and goals are renegotiated based on the learner's current perspectives.

Learner's name

Date

This week, I helped my son with his math.

Example 7

Observation Measure for Listening and Reading

Type of assessment: Observation measure.

Purpose: To assess listening and reading skills.

Method: After learners listen to or read instructions, staff members assess their performance and check the appropriate box in the chart.

For example: After learning how to make instant chocolate pudding for a class party, learners are asked to follow oral or written instructions for making vanilla pudding (familiar instructions) and gelatin dessert (new instructions).

Learners who can comprehend and read instructions without asking questions or looking terribly puzzled are rated "With ease." Those who occasionally ask to have a word provided, a sentence modeled, or seek help from peers are rated "With some support." Learners who need to consult a dictionary, ask peers for translation, or constantly observe others are checked "With great difficulty."

	Receptive skills	*With ease*	*With some support*	*With great difficulty*	*Not at all*
Listening	Follows familiar instructions				
	Follows new instructions				
Reading	Reads familiar instructions				
	Reads new instructions				

Example 8

Observation Measure for Speaking and Writing

Type of assessment: Observation measure.

Purpose: To assess speaking and writing skills.

Method: As learners talk about or write down instructions, staff members assess their performance and check the appropriate box in the chart.

For example: After learning how to make buttered toast, learners are asked to follow oral or written instructions for making toast with peanut butter and jelly (familiar instructions) and bagels and cream cheese (new instructions).

Learners who can produce and write instructions without asking questions or looking terribly puzzled are rated "With ease." Those who occasionally ask to have a word provided, a sentence modeled, or seek help from peers are rated "With some support." Learners who need to consult a dictionary, ask peers for translation, or constantly observe others are checked "With great difficulty."

	Productive skills	*With ease*	*With some support*	*With great difficulty*	*Not at all*
Speaking	Produces familiar spoken instructions that are clear and comprehensible				
	Produces new spoken instructions that are clear and comprehensible				
Writing	Produces familiar written instructions that are clear and comprehensible				
	Produces new written instructions that are clear and comprehensible				

Example 9

Observation Measure for Nonlinguistic Domains

Type of assessment: Observation measure.

Purpose: To assess learners' performance in nonlinguistic domains related to learning and literacy development. The instrument can be used for generating baseline data to document changes during the implementation of the project.

Method: Staff members write comments in the appropriate columns as they listen to learners talk about their abilities and work together in pairs or in small groups. Anecdotes about learners' lives outside the classroom are also used as sources of assessment data.

The following are detailed descriptors for the domain **Confidence** that appears in the observation measure. Staff can develop their own descriptors based on the specific objectives of their project. Numerical values can be attached to the descriptors to facilitate data analysis (see Chapter V for strategies for analyzing data).

Descriptors for **Confidence**

Level 1

Appears shy and unsure of own abilities; does not volunteer information; reluctant to answer if called on; seems overwhelmed by most new tasks; needs a lot of support.

Level 2

Acts confidently when handling familiar information and seems willing to take risks; freely talks about himself/herself and shares information with the class; needs additional challenges to grow and learn.

Level 3

Extremely confident; has a tendency to take over the class and sometimes show off, causing slight resentment in the other students; requires challenging tasks and needs to be in groups where he/she cannot dominate easily.

Similar descriptors can be developed for the other two nonlinguistic domains in the measure, **Participation** and **Transfer to real life.**

Example 9: Observation Measure for Nonlinguistic Domains *(continued)*

Date	Teacher
Unit	Class

	Confidence	***Participation***	***Transfer to real life***
	Descriptors: • Appears shy and unsure of own abilities *or* • Acts confidently when on familiar ground and seems willing to take risks *or* • Extremely confident; has a tendency to take over the class	Descriptors: • Appears overly dependent on one or two friends *or* • Uses the group as a resource and acts as a resource *or* • Likes to work independently most of the time; does not enjoy group work	Descriptors: • Does not yet use literacy skills outside the class *or* • Practices at home *or* • Brings examples and questions from home to the class

Name	***Comments***

Example 10

Writing Assessment Instrument

A. Authenticity/voice/engagement of the reader Score: _____ Comments:	4 = Expression strongly reflects the writer's emotional and/or intellectual involvement in the topic. Strongly engages the attention of the reader.
	3 = The writer is engaged in the topic and engages the reader.
	2 = Uninteresting; not engaging; perfunctory.
	1 = Writing seems to be a mechanical exercise. Marked by clichés, hazy generalizations, meaningless expressions.
B. Focus/organization/development Score: _____ Comments:	4 = Focuses on one main idea. Has clear beginning, middle, and end. Well organized and well developed through examples.
	3 = Focused and organized but may have a flaw in coherence or incomplete closure. Incomplete development. Explanation is strongly implicit.
	2 = Lack of clear focus, organization, or development. Narrative, but no explanation.
	1 = Disorganized; underdeveloped; unconnected generalizations.
C. Sentence mechanics/language Score: _____ Comments:	4 = Few mechanical, usage, or sentence errors. Language used with fluency and variety.
	3 = Some minor mechanical usage or sentence errors. Language used competently to express ideas.
	2 = Enough usage errors to attract attention away from the content. Sentences understandable, but unconventional.
	1 = Language and mechanical errors impair meaning.

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Example 11

Checklist for Assessing Beginning Literacy and Emerging Literacy

Learner's name: _____ Date: _____

Part I: Assessing Reading

A. As literacy starts to emerge, the new reader:

1. Is aware that print carries meaning but only in a very vague sense.
2. Can tell print from nonprint (e.g., decoration) but insists that she/he cannot read anything.
3. Can tell the shape and form of English writing from other types of writing but resists making a guess about the meaning of a word.
4. Recognizes her/his own name and a few sight words but resists predicting what a new word might mean.
5. Can interpret print that is part of the environment, such as reading a stop sign, recognizing a Coca-Cola can, pointing out the McDonald's logo, or interpreting a No Smoking sign, as long as a great deal of support is given.

B. As literacy continues to develop, the new reader:

1. Is able to read familiar signs, labels, and logos as long as they appear in their natural form (e.g., "rice" printed on bag of rice); is willing to experiment and venture some guesses.
2. Recognizes familiar words when written on paper, as long as some context is provided (e.g., a picture of a bag of rice with "rice" written next to it).
3. Can read short familiar texts, such as simple language experience stories, along with other group members.
4. Employs reading strategies that allow her/him to move through familiar texts somewhat independently.
5. Uses reading strategies that allow her/him to derive some meaning from new texts, that is, is beginning to read independently.

Part II: Assessing Writing

A. As literacy emerges, the new writer:

1. Is not yet aware of the functions and uses of writing.
2. Is aware that writing carries meaning but is not yet ready to try to write.
3. Copies letters and words but is not able to read what she/he writes.

Example 11: Checklist for Assessing Beginning Literacy and Emerging Literacy *(continued)*

4. Tries to write something, even if only a few scribbles; talks about what she has written; understands that writing is used to express ideas.

5. Writes her own name independently, as well as some other key words; however, writing still seems to be a mechanical exercise.

B. As literacy continues to develop, the new writer:

1. Writes or copies words and is interested in what the words mean; tries out some of her/his own ideas as long as some support is given; may copy a word and use it to label a picture or photograph.

2. Writes a few words or sentences independently without copying; writing may be uneven and meaning not always clear.

3. Experiments with writing on her/his own; may write a few words about herself/himself or may write about what she/he sees in a photograph.

4. Experiments further with expressing ideas; writes a few words in dialogue journals or attempts to write parts of a language experience story; may need a great deal of support.

5. Writes notes in dialogue journals and writes some parts of language experience stories independently; writing shows beginning elements of organization.

6. Connects ideas and thoughts in writing; may write short description of a picture or an event; writes short description of self or of family; spelling and sentence structure still very uneven.

CHAPTER V

COLLECTING, ANALYZING, AND REPORTING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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This chapter deals with collecting, analyzing, using, and reporting data obtained with four alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation: *surveys,* performance samples, interviews,* and *observation measures.* A variety of different analyses, techniques, and procedures are presented that can be used with each of the alternative approaches. However, the strategies presented for the four instruments also may be used with other types of alternative assessments such as portfolios and learner investigations. This chapter illustrates how alternative assessment data can be analyzed, interpreted, and reported based on the characteristics of family literacy projects.

The chapter is divided into four sections, each of which addresses a different alternative approach. Each section deals with the four key aspects of managing the data obtained from the alternative approaches: (1) collecting the data; (2) analyzing the data; (3) using the data; and (4) reporting the data and find-

* See the Glossary on pages 137-138 of this publication for definitions of *italicized* key terms that appear in this chapter.

ings. Strategies are presented for a variety of stakeholders such as project staff members, learners, advisory groups, coordinating agencies, and representatives of the funding agency. Additional information about alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation is available from such resources as *Qualitative Evaluation Methods* (Patton, 1980) and *A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment* (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992).

Data obtained through alternative assessment approaches are useful in the preplanning, planning, and evaluation phases of family literacy projects. Alternative assessment instruments are particularly useful in giving staff information necessary for (1) planning a program based on the needs of adult learners; (2) aligning curriculum according to the results of learner assessments; (3) monitoring learners' progress toward attaining project objectives; and (4) involving learners in determining their progress toward mutually agreed goals. (See Chapters I and II for a discussion of objectives.)

One of the important advantages of alternative assessment approaches is that they offer staff the opportunity to involve learners in the assessment process. Learners may be involved in such tasks as identifying topics or skills that will be assessed, monitoring their own progress toward attaining project goals, or collaborating to determine their rating on a performance sample. As learners collaborate in the assessment process, they take more responsibility for their own learning and for the *project* in general.

Surveys

Surveys may be used to collect information for the preplanning, planning, and evaluation phases of the planning process model presented in Chapter II. In the preplanning phase, survey data are used to identify the needs of potential participants and to design *objectives* for the project. During the planning phase, survey data may be used to develop curriculum and instructional activities. This section addresses the use of survey results in the evaluation phase of the project. The information presented is based on the needs assessment survey presented in Chapter III, Example 1 (shown again on page 95).

One of the important advantages of alternative assessment approaches is that they offer staff the opportunity to involve learners in the assessment process.

Collecting Survey Data for Evaluation

The responses to each question on the survey should be tabulated to determine the range of responses and the number of respondents who selected each response. For example, the first question on the survey asks the respondents to indicate the number of adults who live in their apartments. The range of responses for this question would consist of the smallest and largest number of adults living in one apartment. A *frequency count* would indicate how many respondents selected each response. Data should be tabulated similarly for each item in the survey. The frequency and range of responses should be tallied for each question according to the type of response choices (for example, yes/no, names of schools, or morning/afternoon). After the

Example 1

Needs Assessment Survey

Name _____ Telephone ( )

Address _____

Native Language _____

1. How many adults live in your apartment? 1. _____
2. How many children in your apartment attend Lincoln Unified School District? (Identify individual schools by name) 2. _____
3. How many adults currently attend GAIN program English classes? 3. _____
4. Where do they attend classes? (e.g., Delta College, adult school) 4. _____
5. If there are adults living in this apartment who are *not* attending GAIN English classes, would they attend GAIN English classes if they were held in your apartment complex? 5. _____
6. How many men would go? 6. _____
7. How many women would go? 7. _____
8. Would these adults agree to attend class four hours a day, five days a week? 8. _____
9. Would they need to have someone outside the family take care of their children during class? 9. _____
10. How many children need child care? 10. _____
11. Should class be held in the morning or in the afternoon? 11. _____
12. Is it a good idea for us to try to get our classes approved for GAIN, or should we have our own literacy program? 12. _____
13. If we cannot get our English classes approved for GAIN, would you attend anyway? 13. _____
14. How many hours per day should classes be held? 14. _____
15. How many days per week should classes be held? 15. _____
16. What would you like to learn? 16. _____
    a. English
    b. How to get a job
    c. How to be a good parent
    d. How the schools operate
    e. How to become a citizen
17. What is your level of English language skills?
    a. Oral skills: (1) Low (2) Medium (3) High 17a. _____
    b. Reading and writing skills: (1) Low (2) Medium (3) High 17b. _____
18. How long have you been in the United States? 18. _____
19. How many children in your apartment are participating in ESEA Title VII programs? 19. _____

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data have been compiled, the total frequency count should equal the number of people who responded to the survey.

Analyzing Survey Data

The results of the needs assessment can be analyzed to answer questions related to planning or evaluating the project. The process of analysis consists of reviewing the compiled data and making judgments about the needs of the learners or about how the project can be improved. Staff may find it helpful to organize the data analysis by posing questions that focus on key aspects of the project. Figure 1 contains sample questions that staff members might use for organizing, analyzing, and using data that are collected with a survey. The

corresponding questions from the needs assessment survey are identified in parentheses.

Staff may find it helpful to organize the data analysis by posing questions that focus on key aspects of the project.

Figure 1

Sample Questions for Data Analysis

1. How many adults living in this community (male and female) are eligible to participate in the project but are not enrolled currently in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes? (questions 1, 3, 6, and 7)
2. How many adults living in this community are interested in attending ESL classes? (questions 6 and 7)
3. What are current and potential participants' needs for child care? (questions 9 and 10)
4. What are current and potential participants' preferences regarding the scheduling of classes? (questions 8, 11, 14, and 15)
5. What are current and potential participants' preferences regarding the content of instruction? (question 16)
6. What are current and potential participants' speaking, reading, and writing skills? (questions 17a and 17b)

Staff Use of Survey Data

Given the high turnover of participants in many family literacy projects, a survey such as the needs assessment survey should be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that project services are based on current learners' needs.

Survey data may be used by staff to determine how well the project is meeting the learners' needs. Given the high turnover of participants in many family literacy projects, a survey such as the needs assessment survey should be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that project services are based on current learners' needs. For example, the findings from Questions 1–5 can be used to identify important background information about the participants. This information also can be used to help staff determine the effectiveness of their recruitment efforts in various neighborhoods. In addition, it can help staff evaluate the suitability of current class locations and identify more convenient sites such as community centers or apartment complexes.

During regular project meetings, staff can consider the results of surveys to determine the extent to which they are addressing the learners' needs and to deal with other issues that might have been identified when the survey was conducted. Such discussions enable staff to improve current services and to plan future activities. Survey data, collected annually or more frequently, can be used to answer questions related to developing *annual evaluation reports* (for example, "What needs have been met?"; "What new needs have been identified?"; "What progress has been made in meeting project objectives?").

Reporting Survey Results

During regular project meetings, staff can consider the results of surveys to determine the extent to which they are addressing the learners' needs and to deal with other issues that might have been identified when the survey was conducted.

Methods of reporting the results of surveys depend on how the data will be used. If the results are to be used for project evaluation, they could be organized around the evaluation questions shown in Figure 1 in the preceding section. The data corresponding to each survey question may be (1) described in brief sentences, for example, "More than half (55%) of the respondents indicated that they need to have someone outside the family take care of their children while they attend class" or "Approximately 30 children will need child care" or (2) illustrated in tables depicting the range of responses and number or percentage of responses. Figure 2 illustrates how data from Question 1 of the needs assessment survey may be presented in a table for a needs assessment or evaluation report.

The reporting of survey results should focus on how staff can improve the project. The conclusions or recommendations should provide answers to questions that staff and learners have posed about the project. Figure 3 contains a table and narrative that summarize the responses to Question 3 in Figure 1 ("What are current and potential participants' requirements for child care?") and present findings and recommendations.

Performance Samples

The reporting of survey results should focus on how staff can improve the project.

Performance samples are illustrations of learners' work in selected tasks. As one kind of performance sample, a writing sample can provide *valid*, authentic representations of learners' progress in attaining project objectives. Because they can be linked directly to project activities, writing samples become natural extensions of the instructional process. Learners can produce writing samples in English, their native language, or both, depending on the purpose of

Figure 2

Number of Adults Living in One Apartment

Number of Adults	*Number/Percentage Responses Total Responses=25*
3	8 (32%)
4	11 (44%)
5	6 (24%)

The survey results indicate that more than half (68%) of the respondents live in apartments housing four or five adults.

the project and their literacy ability. As learners develop examples of their written work throughout the year, they and the staff can identify writing samples that demonstrate strengths as well as areas that need improvement.

This section presents strategies for collecting, analyzing, using, and reporting the results of alternative approaches to assessing writing samples. Strategies refer to the writing assessment instrument shown in Chapter IV, Example 10 (reproduced on the following page).

The writing assessment instrument uses a *rating scale* to evaluate the learner's performance. A rating scale is a technique for assessing an area of interest (for example, reading or writing ability or self-confidence) on a scale of intervals usually designated by numbers or *descriptors* or both. Rating scales are frequently employed to differentiate performance levels. Ratings are based on the learner's performance relative to narrative explanations (descriptors) of each individual rating on the scale. Numerical values can be attached to the descriptors to facilitate data analysis. Sometimes ratings are combined with narrative comments and placed in a performance chart to provide for a more comprehensive analysis (see Example 9 in Chapter IV). The writing assessment instrument in Example 10 enables project

Figure 3

Summary of Respondents' Child Care Needs

Item	*Currently Serving*	*Need to be Served*	*Conclusions*
Number of adults who need child care to attend class	25	35	Ten additional adults require child care services.
Number of children of adult participants	30	45	Child care facilities are currently filled to capacity. Staff need to locate additional space for children of new learners.

The original survey identified 25 adults who needed child care services in order to attend classes. After four weeks, 10 new learners requested child care services in order to attend class. Because the need for child care is increasing, staff recommend that additional space be located for children of new learners.

Example 10

Writing Assessment Instrument

A. Authenticity/voice/engagement of the reader Score: _____ Comments:	4 = Expression strongly reflects the writer's emotional and/or intellectual involvement in the topic. Strongly engages the attention of the reader. 3 = The writer is engaged in the topic and engages the reader. 2 = Uninteresting, not engaging, perfunctory. 1 = Writing seems to be a mechanical exercise. Marked by clichés, hazy generalizations, meaningless expressions.
B. Focus/organization/development Score: _____ Comments:	4 = Focuses on one main idea. Has clear beginning, middle, and end. Well organized and well developed through examples. 3 = Focused and organized but may have a flaw in coherence or incomplete closure. Incomplete development. Explanation is strongly implicit. 2 = Lack of clear focus, organization, or development. Narrative, but no explanation. 1 = Disorganized, underdeveloped, unconnected generalizations.
C. Sentence mechanics/language Score: _____ Comments:	4 = Few mechanical, usage, or sentence errors. Language used with fluency and variety. 3 = Some minor mechanical usage or sentence errors. Language used competently to express ideas. 2 = Enough usage errors to attract attention away from the content. Sentences understandable, but unconventional. 1 = Language and mechanical errors impair meaning.

Source: Adapted from Rena Soifer et al. (1990). *The complete theory-to-practice handbook of adult literacy: Curriculum design and teaching approaches.* New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 178–179.

staff to rate the learners' writing skills in each of three traits, or dimensions, of writing: authenticity, focus, and mechanics. Each of these traits is rated on a four-point scale, from poorer skills (1), to strong skills (4), according to descriptors provided for the ratings.

Staff members could adapt the instrument by developing descriptors that would be appropriate for the learners and curriculum in their project. By developing project-based descriptors and associated rating scales, staff can improve the validity and reliability of the instrument and enhance the accuracy and consistency of assessment and data collection. The descriptors should be arranged in logical sequence with clear definitions for each rating. These are complicated tasks, and staff may wish to seek outside assistance.

As a natural extension of a learning activity, a writing sample serves both instructional and assessment purposes, thereby eliminating the time and energy required for separate tests. By collecting and assessing writing samples on a regular basis and with agreed-on rating scales, staff members can make judgments about learners' growth and

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about progress learners are making toward attaining the objectives of the project. To use rating scales effectively, staff members need to have a thorough understanding of the descriptors. Staff members can achieve this understanding by receiving training in the rating procedure and by collaborating to design the descriptors for the ratings.

By developing project-based descriptors and associated rating scales, staff can improve the validity and reliability of the instrument and enhance the accuracy and consistency of assessment and data collection.

Collecting Data from Writing Samples

Figure 4 shows how data from learners' writing samples can be collected systematically. Data obtained through this procedure can be used to monitor learners' progress in attaining the objectives of the project.

The class list helps staff record assessment results of writing samples on a regular basis, such as weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Staff can use the rating scale to judge learners' writing or ask learners to judge their own work. To accommodate the learners' language proficiency levels, staff can simplify the descriptors so learners can read and use the rating scale for their self-assessments. In this way, assessment becomes an instructional tool that enables learners to recognize and judge effective writing. Portfolios can be used to keep a record of selected examples of learners' writing. Although learners may write on a daily basis, staff can have learners select their best work for inclusion in the portfolios on a specified schedule.

Analyzing Data with Frequency Counts

Simple frequency counts provide a useful way to analyze data collected with rating scales. For more sophisticated data analysis, staff should seek the assistance of a professional evaluator. The analysis of ratings of writing samples can be facilitated by using a class list such as the one shown in Figure 4. Used with the writing assessment instrument, the list helps staff document the ratings according to the four descriptors (1-4) in each of the three dimensions of writing: authenticity, focus, and mechanics. The list provides space for ratings taken at three different times—first testing, second testing, and third testing. This format enables staff to monitor the progress of each individual as well as the total class.

As a natural extension of a learning activity, a writing sample serves both instructional and assessment purposes, thereby eliminating the time and energy required for separate tests.

The class list contains the ratings of a partial number (10) of participants in a family literacy class. The data represent the three assessments conducted in October, January, and April. The numbers under A, B, and C represent the assigned ratings according to the descriptors specified in the instrument. The list can be used internally by the staff or provided as a table in an annual evaluation report or *final performance report.*

The data in the class list may be analyzed further by counting how many learners received each rating for each aspect at each data collection point. The tallies are converted to percentages because the number of learners generally varies from one testing interval to the next. Staff can interpret the impact of the project by examining the degree of change in percentages across the three testing intervals. This

Portfolios can be used to keep a record of selected examples of learners' writing. Although learners may write on a daily basis, staff can have learners select their best work for inclusion in the portfolios on a specified schedule.

change can be illustrated graphically and documented in a matrix such as the one shown in Figure 5 (see page 102).

Figure 5 provides a summary of the results of writing assessments conducted at three testing intervals (October, January, and April). It displays ratings for three writing traits: authenticity, focus, and sentence mechanics. If this summary were included in an evaluation report, it would be accompanied by a narrative description of the progress and trends toward accomplishing project goals:

> The table reflects an increase in the percentage of learners who score at higher levels with each assessment, suggesting progress in attaining project objectives. The greatest growth took place in **authenticity**.

Using the Results of Assessments of Writing Samples

Staff can use the results of writing assessments for planning instruction, monitoring progress, determining the degree to which objectives have been achieved, and refining the curriculum and instruction. The results can help staff members form groups of learners with similar needs and design appropriate instructional activities. Data can be analyzed to indicate the progress of individual learners as

Figure 4

Class List: Results of Assessments of Writing Samples

Instructions: Record date of the assessment and enter the rating (1–4) under each letter:

A = Authenticity/Voice /Engagement of the Reader; B = Focus/Organization/Development;
C = Sentence Mechanics/Language

		First Testing				Second Testing				Third Testing		
Name or I.D. No.	*Date*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*Date*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*Date*	*A*	*B*	*C*
B. López	10/25	1	1	2	1/15	1	2	2	4/2	1	2	3
J. Garcia	10/15	1	1	1	1/15	1	1	1	4/2	1	1	1
M. Matello	10/15	1	1	1	1/15	1	2	2	4/2	1	2	3
K. Turner	10/15	1	2	3	1/15	2	3	4	4/2	2	1	2
R. Diaz	10/15	2	1	2	1/15	2	1	2	4/2	2	1	2
B. Ruiz	10/15	1	2	1	1/15	2	2	2	4/2	2	2	3
A. Rodríguez	10/15	1	1	1	1/15	2	1	2	4/2	1	3	3
J. Fernandez	10/15	2	1	1	1/15	2	2	2	4/2	3	4	3
C. López	10/15	1	2	1	1/15	2	4	2	4/2	2	4	3
B. Nuñez	10/15	3	4	3	1/15	3	4	4	4/2	4	4	4

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Staff may choose to involve the learner in developing descriptors, selecting writings to be assessed, and ultimately evaluating their own writing.

well as trends of the whole class. Assessment results also can show the relative effectiveness of various components of the project.

Staff may review several writing samples by one learner to identify changes and trends in the learner's writing strengths. Such analysis can be accomplished using formal rating scales of writing traits, holistic scores, or without any type of actual rating. Learners' writing samples may also be shared among staff to gain insights into the overall effectiveness of instructional activities. When learners are promoted to higher levels, their writing samples can be passed on to their instructors to ensure that instruction is appropriate and uninterrupted.

Writing assessments are instructional tools as well as vehicles for appraising learners' progress. When shared with the learner, the results provide immediate feedback that can lead to improved writing performance. Staff may choose to involve the learner in developing descriptors, selecting writings to be assessed, and ultimately evaluating their own writing. Such self-assessments can help learners acquire an awareness of the characteristics of effective writing.

When parents appreciate the importance of writing and other literacy behaviors, they can become more confident in supporting their children's language development. When parents experience success at writing creatively about meaningful topics, they can transfer their joy of writing to their children. They may share their writing with their children, encourage their children to write about their own experiences, and even write stories together.

Figure 5

Summary of Three Writing Assessments

	Authenticity				***Focus***				***Sentence Mechanics***			
Testing	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
First=Oct. (*n*=125)	66%	22%	12%	0	68%	20%	12%	0	80%	18%	2%	0
Second=Jan. (*n*=118)	2%	38%	34%	26%	14%	44%	25%	17%	43%	24%	22%	11%
Third=April (*n*=105)	0	17%	29%	54%	0	17%	49%	34%	20%	53%	23%	4%

Summarizing Writing Sample Assessments for Evaluation Reports

When parents experience success at writing creatively about meaningful topics, they can transfer their joy of writing to their children.

Methods of reporting the results of writing assessments vary according to the purpose of the reports. One approach may be to present the class list (Figure 4) with an accompanying narrative in an evaluation report. The report could be part of an application for a continuation grant or used by project staff to plan additional classes and services. The data summarized in Figure 5 could be included in a final performance report. To provide an interpretation of the data, staff can develop a narrative that summarizes changes that resulted from the project and progress made by the learners in achieving the objectives of the project.

Figure 6 illustrates how staff might report the results of three assessments of writing samples. The example, containing a table and narrative explanation, is based on the writing assessment instrument (Chapter IV, Example 10).

Figure 6

Learners' Growth in Writing (Authenticity)

Testing	*Authenticity*			
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*
First Testing (Oct.)	66%	22%	12%	0
Second Testing (Jan.)	2%	38%	34%	26%
Third Testing (April)	0	17%	29%	54%

Sample Narrative

The table identifies the percentage of project participants scoring at each level (1, 2, 3, 4) for each of the three assessment intervals (October, January, April). The percentage of learners who made progress from low levels (1 and 2) to high levels (3 and 4) increased substantially over the three testing intervals. The initial assessment in October identified 66% of learners at Level 1 and no learners at Level 4. By the second testing in January, however, only 2% of the learners scored at Level 1 and 26% scored at Level 4. By the end of classes in April, the third interval testing indicated that no learners scored at Level 1, 17% scored at Level 2, 29% at Level 3, and 54% at Level 4. Learners participated in an average of three hours per week of writing instruction and associated activities for a total of 72 hours during the 24 weeks of classes. The assessment results demonstrate that learners have made progress in writing content that is authentic and engaging.

Interviews

Interviews can be used to collect detailed information for assessing and evaluating the project. An interview procedure may be used with individuals or small groups of people such as *focus groups*. This section will deal with the collection, analysis, staff use, and reporting of data obtained from focus groups.

Interviews are particularly appropriate for family literacy projects because participants may not have the literacy skills necessary for paper-and-pencil assessments. Furthermore, because interviews can be conducted in the learners' native language, participants may be more willing and able to provide information to staff.

Interviews may be used independently or together with other measures to generate data to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and to identify successful components of the project. They can be conducted by an instructor, project coordinator, or professional evaluator. This section of the chapter is based on interviews conducted with small groups—focus groups—according to a protocol that focuses on specific topics. *Protocol* is a specified set of procedures and questions designed to achieve the purposes of the assessment activity.

Collecting Interview Data Through Focus Groups

Because interviews can be conducted in the learners' native language, participants may be more willing and able to provide information to staff.

Focus group data can be collected with a question-and-answer procedure in which a facilitator addresses questions to group members. The responses are documented in writing or recorded on audio- or videotape. Although the proceedings may be recorded by the facilitator, staff members may want to assign this responsibility to a separate individual to avoid burdening the facilitator. An important element of the focus group is the nature of the communication (verbal and nonverbal) between the facilitator and the respondents as questions, answers, and comments are stated and clarified. Therefore, the facilitator should be sensitive to the cross-cultural and other interpersonal dimensions that characterize group activities.

The protocol for a focus group should be established in advance and linked carefully to the goals and objectives of the activity. (See Figure 7, p. 109, for an example of a protocol.) However, the facilitator should not discourage responses that may deviate from the main purpose of the session. Such flexibility creates opportunities for the facilitator to assess a variety of related learner needs and outcomes such as language, social interaction, confidence, and critical thinking, that are very difficult to assess through paper-and-pencil measures. These issues may be recorded in anecdotal form and analyzed later when the tapes are reviewed.

Interview data may be collected at intervals throughout the year, on a pre/post basis or at the end of instructional units. The data can be analyzed and interpreted in terms of longitudinal progress, pre/post changes, and project implementation and accomplishments. Generally, focus group data are collected and reported on the entire group.

although data gathered on individuals during the session also may be useful.

Analyzing Focus Group Data

Interviews are particularly appropriate for family literacy projects because participants may not have the literacy skills necessary for paper-and-pencil assessments.

Analyzing focus group data can be a challenging task. As they review large amounts of data, staff need to decide which findings to analyze in detail, which ones to mention only briefly, and which ones to ignore altogether. The importance attached to specific findings is determined by the evaluation questions, project objectives, and the intended audiences (for example, school board, project staff, and funding source). Ultimately, decisions regarding the complexity of the analyses should be guided by how the results are going to be used. Thus, the analysis could focus primarily on addressing the informational needs of program decision makers, yet be sufficiently flexible to identify issues that were not anticipated.

The goal of analyzing focus group data is to examine systematically the participants' comments in order to identify trends or patterns that recur among different individuals or groups (Krueger, 1988). The outcome of the analysis may be a report that summarizes relevant trends, presents conclusions about the project's effectiveness, and offers suggestions for improvement. To accomplish these tasks, the analyst must sort through an array of statements and identify opinions, feelings, or perceptions that are common to several participants, even though they may be expressed in different words or styles. Some attention needs to be paid to determining the range and diversity of participants' perceptions. Less emphasis is given to singular opinions not supported by others in the group. The use of numbers or percentages may help illustrate participants' responses, although they are not necessary for describing trends or supporting conclusions drawn from the analysis.

An important element of the focus group is the nature of the communication (verbal and nonverbal) between the facilitator and the respondents as questions, answers, and comments are stated and clarified.

A common misconception is that the analysis of focus group data is a simple process of finding a few good quotes that support the analyst's point of view. To produce valid conclusions, however, the analysis needs to be conducted systematically according to a prescribed sequence of procedures (see the three-stage process below). The process should allow staff to analyze a large amount of qualitative data and draw practical conclusions about the effectiveness of the project.

Ideally, the person who facilitates the focus group should also analyze the results. The results can be interpreted in part based on the firsthand experiences of the facilitator who actually witnessed the interpersonal dynamics, body language, and affective factors that influenced the activity. Sometimes, however, it may not be possible for individuals who collected the data to be involved in the analysis. For example, an instructor may conduct an interview with a small group of learners with the assistance of a bilingual staff member. Audiotapes of the interview, translated into English if necessary, might be reviewed and summarized by a professional evaluator for an evaluation report. Comments by those who conducted the focus group

could be added to the transcript, providing the evaluator with valuable additional information.

According to Krueger (1988), the process of analyzing focus group data can be divided into three stages: (1) reviewing the raw data; (2) creating descriptive statements; and (3) interpreting the results.

Reviewing the raw data. At this stage, staff members analyze the tapes or notes taken during the focus group discussion. The raw data consist of the participants' actual statements recorded in writing or on audio- or videotape. Also included in the raw data are the facilitator's descriptions of the participants, such as their attitudes and body language, and the general ambience of the session.

The goal of analyzing focus group data is to examine systematically the participants' comments in order to identify trends or patterns that recur among different individuals or groups.

During this stage, the analyst should focus on becoming as familiar as possible with the range of data collected and then begin organizing participants' responses by categories or topics. Data may be organized by (1) marking all related topics in the transcript with the same colored marking pen; (2) extracting comments that deal with the same issue and writing them on a single page; or (3) rearranging the text according to specific categories.

Creating descriptive statements. The next stage in the analysis involves reducing and organizing the raw data by creating descriptive statements that summarize the participants' responses according to topics. The summary also can include illustrative quotes that are especially insightful or indicative of the participants' comments. Comments need not be transcribed verbatim; rather, staff may prefer to use alternative statements that capture the speakers' intended meaning. The analyst should begin reducing the data and preparing the descriptive summary as soon as possible after each focus group session.

Interpreting the results. At the final stage, the analyst needs to enhance the descriptive statements by drawing conclusions and interpretations from the data. The analyst should form conclusions about trends or patterns based on the purpose of the focus group session (for example, answers to staff's evaluation questions or evidence of progress toward meeting project objectives). Unexpected outcomes of the session also should be noted. To draw valid inferences from the data, the analyst should consider such factors as commonly used words or phrases, the frequency of certain responses, and the tone and intensity of the speaker's voice. It is also important to examine the context of participants' responses—that is, whether the comments occurred in response to a specific question or were spontaneously triggered by an open-ended question.

The analyst may give more weight to comments based on some criteria; for example, statements based on personal experience may be accorded more importance than something the speaker heard someone else say. Other factors to consider are the consistency of particular statements and whether individuals change their minds based on others' comments. Analyzing such factors will enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Using Focus Group Data

To draw valid inferences from the data, the analyst should consider such factors as commonly used words or phrases, the frequency of certain responses, and the tone and intensity of the speaker's voice.

Staff can use focus groups to gather information that is not easily obtained through written assessments. The interactive nature of the focus group process allows staff to shape the direction of the session and to delve into selected responses. By probing specific topics, the facilitator can uncover causes of a problem and identify potential strategies for refining and improving the project. Focus groups enable staff to explore aspects of the project from the participants' perspectives, thereby enhancing the linkage between the learners' needs and the project's objectives.

Focus group data can be used to identify new needs of participants as well as clarify needs that were identified earlier through surveys or individual interviews. By learning more about participants—their attitudes, the cultural barriers they face, their patterns of social interaction, and their levels of confidence—staff can make more informed choices about curriculum content, instructional approaches, and the overall design of the project.

To use focus group data effectively, staff need to identify trends and patterns among the group's responses. In general, the significance of a given issue is determined by the frequency of comments about it. For example, a single comment such as "The book is too hard" would not carry as much weight in the data analysis as five or ten statements about the difficulty of the instructional materials. If several comments were made, the staff might want to examine how appropriate the materials are for the learners' literacy levels.

Staff also can use focus groups to obtain information about literacy-related events in learners' families. For example, a prompt such as "Tell me how you are using the home learning kits with your children" may help staff determine the effects of project activities on the learners' families. Comments may range from "Using the materials weekly and enjoy them very much" (ten respondents) to "Not using the booklets because we don't have any crayons" (two respondents). The first response helps confirm the success of the project; the second suggests that the staff need to help some parents obtain what is necessary to use the home learning kits.

By probing specific topics, the facilitator can uncover causes of a problem and identify potential strategies for refining and improving the project.

Using focus groups enables staff to generate more detailed information than is possible through some other assessment procedures. For example, parenting skills, attitudes, confidence, and other hard-to-assess domains can be explored through focus groups. Because feedback is gathered directly and spontaneously from the participants, results are often highly indicative of the participants' perspectives.

Summarizing Focus Group Data in a Narrative Report

Reports of focus group interviews should be designed according to the needs of the audience, the purpose of the report, and the goals and objectives of the project. The results of focus groups can be communicated orally or in writing. According to Krueger (1988), focus group reports can be written following three different models:

1. Raw data model that presents the question or topic that the focus group addressed and a list of the participants' responses.
2. Summary description model that summarizes the results of the focus group and includes selected quotations from participants.
3. Interpretive model that provides a descriptive summary, illustrative quotes, and a narrative interpretation of the results.

The raw data model is the fastest and easiest to develop and is most appropriate for an audience that is interested in reviewing all the participants' responses. This model, however, requires that readers do their own analysis of the data. The descriptive and interpretive models are usually more effective because they provide examples of the data as well as detailed analyses of the findings.

Reports of focus groups should be designed according to the needs of the audience, the purpose of the report, and the goals and objectives of the project.

A focus group report should include a statement describing the purpose of the session, an outline of the key questions addressed by the group, and a summary of the way the session was set up (for example, number of people interviewed and method of selecting participants). The results of the report should be organized and presented according to the key questions that the focus group addressed. It may be helpful to describe aspects of the session that may limit the usefulness of the data or prevent conclusive statements about the project. A section for conclusions and recommendations is useful for integrating the key findings into a concise summary and providing suggestions for modifying the project based on the results. An appendix to the report may include the focus group protocol, quotes from the participants, or the entire transcript.

Figure 7 shows how to document the purpose, protocol, and results of a focus group session that addressed parenting workshops held during a family literacy project. The sample narrative might appear in an annual evaluation report or final performance report.

Observation Measures

Observation measures can be used to collect and record various kinds of information. They may focus on such features as learners' characteristics, group interactions, or language and literacy performance. Observations may be used as closed-ended assessments, such as indicating the learner's level of listening comprehension, or they may be more open-ended, as when staff members judge how confident a learner appears when participating in a cooperative learning group.

This section deals with the collection, analysis, staff use, and reporting of data obtained with observation measures. References are made to the measures that appear in Chapter IV to assess listening, reading, speaking, and writing. A *modified cohort design* is presented to illustrate how projects can analyze assessment data in a manner consistent with evaluation requirements for comparison group data.

A focus group report should include a statement describing the purpose of the session, an outline of the key questions addressed by the group, and a summary of the way the session was set up.

Figure 7

Sample Summary of Focus Group Results

The purpose of the focus group was to determine the effectiveness of the five parenting workshops held on Saturdays and the degree to which the workshops had met the needs of the adult learners and the objectives of the project. Thirty-five learners participated in the focus group.

Protocol for the Focus Group

Staff asked the parents to describe the parenting workshops they attended. Questions included: Describe how you were involved in selecting the topics. Were you unable to attend any of the workshops? Why? Do you feel you are more confident as a parent because of the workshops? Why? Do you help your children with their homework? What did you learn that you did not know before? What are you doing differently as a result of the workshops?

At least half of the parents attended three or more of the five parenting workshops. They reported that they had an opportunity to work with staff to plan the workshops but were unable to recall any specific topics they had requested. All agreed that the workshops helped them as parents and enabled them to work more confidently with their children at home. A majority of parents indicated that they reviewed homework assignments, although only a small number actually helped their children with reading and writing assignments.

The parents expressed general agreement about the ill effects of television viewing and indicated that they had been successful in reducing the amount of television that their children watched at home. Most stated that they communicated with their children in their native language, whereas only two parents indicated that they interacted with their children in English on a regular basis. The staff noted that, compared with the focus group held earlier in the year, the parents in this session seemed more communicative and confident when discussing parenting issues.

In summary, the parents enjoyed the workshops and enthusiastically volunteered information during the sessions. Staff noted that parents who participated in both focus group sessions appeared more competent and confident when expressing their ideas in English than those who attended one session. Approximately half the participants could respond in English, and the other half required the assistance of an interpreter. In general, the workshops were well attended and seemed to provide parents with information that made them feel more confident about helping their children at home. Staff agreed that future workshops could be more effective by dealing with topics that are (1) related to parent-child learning activities at home and (2) linked to the curriculum used in weekly family literacy classes.

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Collecting Observation Data with Rating Scales

The observation measures shown in Chapter IV, Examples 7 and 8 (reproduced below) can be used to collect data about the learners' progress in acquiring receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) language skills. The instruments use rating scales to indicate the learner's degree of proficiency.

Observation measures can be used to collect and record various kinds of information. They may focus on such features as learners' characteristics, group interactions, or language and literacy performance.

Example 7

Observation Measure for Listening and Reading

Type of assessment: Observation measure.

Purpose: To assess listening and reading skills.

	Receptive skills	*With ease*	*With some support*	*With great difficulty*	*Not at all*
Listening	Follows familiar instructions				
	Follows new instructions				
Reading	Reads familiar instructions				
	Reads new instructions				

Example 8

Observation Measure for Speaking and Writing

Type of assessment: Observation measure.

Purpose: To assess speaking and writing skills.

	Productive skills	*With ease*	*With some support*	*With great difficulty*	*Not at all*
Speaking	Produces familiar spoken instructions that are clear and comprehensible				
	Produces new spoken instructions that are clear and comprehensible				
Writing	Produces familiar written instructions that are clear and comprehensible				
	Produces new written instructions that are clear and comprehensible				

The data collected with the observation measures can be used to make statements about the performance of an individual or group according to descriptors that are associated with each of the ratings: **With ease**, **With some support**, **With great difficulty**, and **Not at all**. The instruments are depicted as examples that staff can adapt to reflect the objectives of their project. Staff can modify the instruments by designing their own descriptors and establishing their own protocol for rating their learners in a consistent, reliable manner.

The descriptors reflect staff's expectations about how learners will perform at various stages of development. The descriptors should provide clear distinctions among developmental levels on the rating scale and represent appropriate growth according to the project's *literacy framework* (see Chapters II and III for a discussion of the literacy framework). The lowest rating and its descriptor should reflect what the staff has determined to be the lowest level of language proficiency exhibited by new enrollees. The highest rating and its descriptor should indicate mastery or the highest level of proficiency the staff consider attainable for the learners in the project. Each item on the scale should be mutually exclusive and part of an even number of selections (for example, four or six), thereby eliminating middle-ground options and requiring observers to make clear choices. Creating well developed descriptors and training staff to use the observation measures will enhance the reliability and validity of the instruments.

Assessment through observation means watching learners perform various tasks related to the project. Such assessment can be done without having to set aside additional time in the project for testing. The observations should be based on the project's objectives and conducted systematically and consistently at predetermined time intervals.

The following is a summary of strategies that family literacy staff can use for obtaining accurate and meaningful data with observation measures.

1. Establish descriptors that define different levels of performance that can be agreed on by similarly qualified raters who are familiar with the instructional design of the project. The descriptors should be (a) aligned with the curriculum and objectives of the project and (b) reflective of the lowest and highest performance levels of the learners.
2. Create protocols and record observations at regular intervals (for example, monthly, quarterly, or annually). The frequency is determined by how the data will be used and the length of instructional units (lesson, course, or class session).
3. Develop an instrument for collecting and managing the data such as the two observation measures shown in Examples 7 and 8.

Methods for collecting observational data should ensure that the form for collecting the data is completed for each learner according to established intervals and that each learner's level of performance is recorded for each skill. The time intervals for assessment are

determined by the techniques that will be used to analyze the results. For example, a pre/post analysis requires that data be collected at the beginning and end of an instructional unit or specified period of time. To do a longitudinal analysis, staff need to collect data at more frequent intervals and over longer periods of time such as a year or more. Collecting data at frequent intervals for longitudinal analysis helps staff identify patterns and trends in the learners' performance. Such data are useful for comparing the performance of the project participants with individuals who have similar characteristics or who have not received project services.

Analyzing Observation Data with a Modified Cohort Design

The descriptors should provide clear distinctions among developmental levels on the rating scale and represent appropriate growth according to the project's literacy framework.

Staff can analyze data obtained with the observation measures by reviewing the results and determining the extent to which learners are making progress in attaining project objectives. Staff may want to analyze data separately for each language group or each English proficiency level served by the project. Based on their analysis, staff can modify instructional activities to enhance learner outcomes in the future. Additional analysis and interpretation can be conducted by assigning numerical values to the descriptors on the rating scale. Staff can report how many learners received what rating at each prescribed interval. If the number of learners differs for each observation, the data can be presented as percentages of the total number of learners observed. Comparisons should be made through percentages, because the number of learners usually varies for each year of the project and for each collection interval.

Data collected through observation measures, writing samples, and other types of alternative assessments may be analyzed according to a modified cohort design; that is, growth of project participants can be measured against a comparison group (cohort), thereby satisfying one of the requirements of many funding sources. This design is adapted from research by McConnell (1982). (See Chapter I for a discussion of the comparison group issue.)

The modified cohort design provides an alternative to comparing the project participants' growth with adult learners who are not part of the project. If the cohort design is implemented at the beginning of the first year of a literacy project, staff would establish comparison group data by collecting data on new enrollees before instruction begins. As new learners enroll during the project, staff would add information about them to the comparison group data. At a predetermined interval, perhaps after completing an instructional unit, a semester, or the first year, staff would collect observational data and measure it against the comparison group data to assess the learners' progress toward meeting project objectives. For an extended longitudinal analysis, assessment data could be collected during the second or third year and measured against the comparison group data that had been compiled to that point.

Some funding sources may require that part of the project evaluation be based on data collected at predetermined intervals, usually every twelve months. Staff can meet this requirement by assessing

project participants' performance after twelve months of instruction and comparing the results with the comparison group. Data on new enrollees who are added to the comparison group should be collected within two weeks of enrollment, after the staff has become somewhat familiar with their background. The data become comparison group data, collected whenever new learners enroll during the year, thereby accommodating open enrollment policies adopted by many family literacy projects.

Collecting data at frequent intervals for longitudinal analysis helps staff identify patterns and trends in the learners' performance.

The modified cohort design is based on the assumption that the comparison group data represent levels of performance that would have been demonstrated by individuals who had not benefited from services of the project—a population frequently referred to as a "nonproject comparison group."

After the comparison group data have been established, staff can compare differences between the comparison group and the project participants in terms of the number and percentage of individuals who received each rating on the observation measures. Differences between the two groups can be illustrated through bar or line graphs that identify each group according to time in the project (see Figure 8, page 117). Illustrations should be accompanied by a narrative that describes the relationship between the learners' performance and the services provided by the project.

Data collected through observation measures may be analyzed according to a *modified cohort design;* that is, growth of project participants can be measured against a comparison group (cohort), thereby satisfying one of the requirements of many funding sources.

Examples 7 and 8 of observation measures, found in Chapter IV, contain two performance descriptors for each of the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. By counting and reporting the number (or percentage) of learners observed performing at each level during each observation, staff can make global statements about the group's abilities in each skill. The observations may show that the learners were uniformly low in every skill at the beginning of instruction or that they exhibited great diversity in their abilities. Longitudinal or posttest data may show that most learners were performing at more proficient levels or that there was considerable variation in ability.

The modified cohort design may show that learners who have participated in the project are performing at higher levels than members of the comparison group who have not yet benefited from program services, thereby validating the positive effects of the project. Longitudinal data collected over several years may reveal relationships between the learners' growth in performance and length of time they were enrolled in the project (see graphic illustration of such relationships in Figure 8).

Using the Results of Observation Measures

To provide useful information, observation measures should be (1) tied directly to the objectives and instructional activities of the project and (2) conducted on a regular basis. By linking the descriptors and progression of ratings to instructional priorities, staff can obtain valuable data for assessing learners' ongoing progress and for improving the instructional program. The observation measures also can be used as initial assessment tools for determining learners' needs. For

example, learners who are initially observed performing tasks **with ease** probably would need instruction that is different from those who are rated as performing them **not at all**.

The modified cohort design is based on the assumption that the comparison group data represent levels of performance that would have been demonstrated by individuals who had not benefited from services of the project.

Staff can use data obtained with observation measures to modify curriculum content and instructional methodology. For instance, if the data indicate that many learners are performing listening tasks **with ease** but writing assignments **with great difficulty**, staff may want to devote more time and effort to writing instruction. Similarly, if several learners are observed performing a certain task **with great difficulty** even after it has been presented and practiced many times, staff may want to consider how instructional activities could be modified to help learners gain mastery of the task.

To make the best use of data collected with observation measures, staff members need to examine individual learners' performance and create aggregate profiles of the whole class. These findings can be discussed regularly at staff meetings to determine how the project can be more responsive to learners' needs. For example, learners whose individual data contain several ratings of **not at all** or **with great difficulty** may have special needs that warrant more personal attention. If the aggregate data show ratings that are spread across many performance levels, staff members may want to discuss how they can address multilevel classes more effectively.

Individual learners' performance records may be used to determine whether current instructional groupings are appropriate and how new groups might be formed. Significant variation in ratings may be due to discrepancies in the staff members' knowledge of how to use the observation measures. Staff may need to clarify the protocols for using the measures and the definitions of the performance descriptors. Observation measures should be used systematically according to predetermined criteria that are related to the project's objectives. During the observations, however, staff may identify other relevant information that should be documented. For example, staff may note that some learners are frustrated, socially isolated, or have auditory, speech, or visual impairments. Staff also may document special talents and interests shown by learners. Such findings will help staff create activities that are more closely linked to learners' needs and make other improvements to the project.

To provide useful information, observation measures should be (1) tied directly to the objectives and instructional activities of the project and (2) conducted on a regular basis.

As with other alternative assessments, the purpose of observation measures should be clearly established before an instrument is developed or used. Observation measures can be used to plan instruction and to place learners in appropriate groups or activities. As discussed in Chapter IV, observational data can provide staff with information about learners' ongoing progress in attaining project objectives. Observation measures also can yield data for annual evaluation reports or the final performance report.

Reporting the Results of Observation Measures

Reporting observational data involves summarizing the results or developing interpretations of the observations. Data collected from

observational measures can be used to make descriptive statements about what individual learners or groups of learners can do relative to project goals, objectives, and instructional services.

The observation measures found in Chapter IV are used to rate learners according to their receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills in handling new or familiar instructions. What is new or familiar depends on the learners' prior experiences and the topics addressed in the project. Thus, the reporting of observation data should include descriptions or examples of the content or activities to which learners were responding when the observation ratings were made.

To make the best use of data collected with observation measures, staff members need to examine individual learners' performance and create aggregate profiles of the whole class.

Bar graphs are especially useful for presenting summaries of observational data. For example, each bar could represent the number of learners who performed a specific skill at a given level (that is, the number of learners who read new instructions **with great difficulty**). The construction of the bar graph depends on what specific information the staff want to emphasize. Figure 8 illustrates growth in learners' ability over two years' time to produce written instructions that are clear and comprehensible. Figure 8 also illustrates the findings of a modified cohort design in which progress of learners who have participated in the project for one and two years is measured against the performance of a comparsion group of learners who had not received project services.

As with other alternative assessments, the purpose of observation measures should be clearly established before an instrument is developed or used.

Figure 9 summarizes hypothetical data for a class of 25 participants who were rated at quarterly intervals. The table is followed by a narrative explanation. The numbers and narrative address only one of the eight areas assessed by the two observation measures. Staff could develop similar illustrations for data obtained for the other seven skill areas. When the numbers (*n*) vary greatly between groups of learners or years of implementation, percentages can be used instead of numbers.

As was pointed out in Chapter I, open enrollment and uneven attendance in many family literacy projects often prevent staff from assessing the same learners every time an observation is conducted. Therefore, staff should explain this phenomenon in the evaluation report and present assessment results only for the learners who attended regularly. Staff also may want to include in the report some of the causes of attrition and the strategies that are being used to improve retention.

Open enrollment and uneven attendance in many family literacy projects often prevent staff from assessing the same learners every time an observation is conducted.

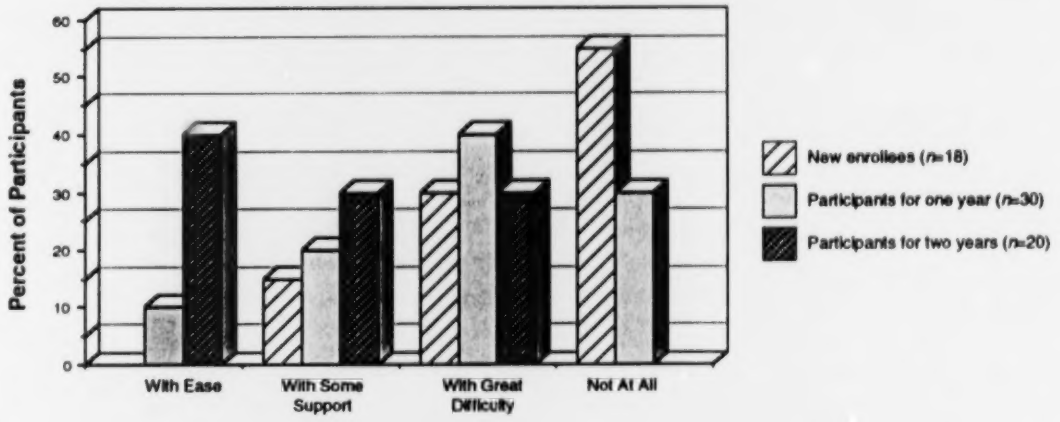
If a project has open enrollment, a second quarterly observation conducted in one class may be the first observation for new enrollees and the second observation for experienced participants. In this case, data gathered on several learners should be aggregated only if each set of data represents approximately equal amounts of instructional time. Data on learners who started at different times may need to be reported separately, or if all learners' data are combined, the first observation should in fact be the first for each learner.

Each of the eight receptive and productive skills identified on the two observation measures should be illustrated and reported separately. A table that illustrated all eight skills might confuse the reader and fail

Figure 8

Summary of Data Collected with Observation Measure (Modified Cohort Design)

"Produces new written instructions that are clear and comprehensible"



Sample Narrative: Evaluation results based on a modified cohort design indicate that the project had a positive impact on the development of literacy skills among adults. Furthermore, the data suggest that learners who have participated for two years show substantially greater gains than those who have been in the project for only one year. Staff suggested that differences in performance between the two groups were attributed in part to the learners' need for a full year of participation in order to make rapid progress in subsequent years.

Figure 9

Summary of Ratings of Four Obeservations (*n*=25)

Quarterly Ratings on "Produces new written instructions that are clear and comprehensible"

Rating	*September First Observation*	*December Second Observation*	*March Third Observation*	*June Fourth Observation*
With Ease	0	0	3	10
With Some Support	0	5	12	8
With Great Difficulty	5	5	10	7
Not at All	20	15	0	0

Sample Narrative: Figure 9 shows an increase in the percentage of high ratings from the first to the fourth observation and a decrease in the less proficient ratings. For the first observation in September, none of the learners was able to write new instructions that were clear and comprehensible. However, by the fourth observation in June, after nine months of instruction, 18 of the 25 learners could write new instructions with ease or with some support.

to delineate important details. Staff should include a narrative interpretation of the results with each table as shown in the examples in this section, or they could describe the results in narrative form and place it with the related goal or objective as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Report of Learners' Progress in Attaining Objective for Receptive and Productive Language Skills

Objective –Literacy: By the end of each year of the project, participants will improve their receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills at least one level using observation measures developed by the project.

Sample Narrative

The objective was achieved during the second year of the project. Based on the observation measures, learners experienced growth in all eight literacy skill areas. The greatest growth occurred in listening skills with 72% of the learners rated **with ease** for that category. Fifty-seven percent received the rating **with ease** for speaking, 29% for reading, and 16% for writing. The results of the observation measures are consistent with the comments of staff who indicated that listening and speaking skills were emphasized during the first two years of the project in response to the learners' identified needs and requests.

Based on the results of data analysis according to a modified cohort design, the project has had positive effects on the learners' literacy development. The language classes, which integrate literacy instruction with basic life skills, represent a potentially successful component of the project.

Summary

Alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation are especially useful for meeting the needs of participants in a family literacy project. The results of alternative assessment approaches can be used to (1) determine the extent to which a project is attaining its goals; (2) ascertain changes that will improve the overall effectiveness of a project; and (3) identify successful components of a project.

Staff can strengthen the use of alternative approaches by (1) collecting data systematically; (2) analyzing the data to provide meaningful interpretations of the results of assessments; (3) using the data to answer questions that staff, learners, and others have about the project; and (4) creating informative reports that summarize the results of the assessments.

By considering authentic representations of what learners and staff are doing, alternative assessments can provide clear insights into the effects of the project on adult learners and their children.

Surveys, performance samples, interviews, and observation measures are four kinds of alternative assessments which, together with *standardized assessment* measures, can be used to create a comprehensive evaluation design for family literacy projects. To maximize their effectiveness, alternative assessments need to be tailored to the unique goals, objectives, and program design of the project. By considering authentic representations of what learners and staff are doing, alternative assessments can provide clear insights into the effects of the project on adult learners and their children. As an integral part of identifying needs, assessing ongoing progress, and determining project effectiveness, alternative approaches play an indispensable role in enabling staff and learners to collaborate in designing a project that is responsive to the needs of language-minority learners, families, and communities.

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CHAPTER VI

NEXT STEPS: USING THE RESULTS TO REFINE THE PROJECT

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Chapters I through V of this handbook describe processes and procedures to be followed from the early development of a family literacy project through the collection and reporting of data to determine how well the project is progressing. Throughout the volume the authors have emphasized the importance of linking assessment and evaluation to the needs of the learners. This chapter will describe how the authors attempted to link the contents of the handbook to the needs of staff members in *family literacy projects.** The chapter will demonstrate how the planning process model introduced in Chapter II was used to guide the development of this handbook.

This chapter is divided into three sections: (1) overview of the development of the handbook; (2) description of the publication of the revisions to the handbook; and (3) additions to the handbook according to feedback from reviewers.

* See the Glossary on pages 137-138 of this publication for definitions of *italicized* key terms that appear in this chapter.

Use of the Planning Process Model to Develop the Handbook

The handbook was first developed in 1991 and field-tested in 1992 and 1993. This section describes the process used to develop and field test the volume. The process was very similar to the planning process model described in detail in Chapter II. The model is used in this section to help the reader understand the rationale for the design of the handbook and to illustrate how a resource document can be developed and then revised collaboratively with the users of the volume.

Development of the Field-Test Edition

In December 1990, the California Department of Education's Bilingual Education Office (BEO) held a one-day seminar for project directors of the state's *Family English Literacy Programs (FELP).* The seminar was funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) through Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—also known as the Bilingual Education Act. At the seminar, the participants identified several issues of importance:

- Standardized tests are rarely available and rarely appropriate for an adult population of English learners.
- Alternative assessments, though appropriate, are not readily available at present.
- Few guidelines have been published describing the development of alternative assessments for this population.

The project directors emphasized that family literacy projects are extremely diverse in design, curricula, populations served, languages served, purpose, and location.

The project directors also emphasized that family literacy projects are extremely diverse in design, curricula, populations served, languages served, purpose, and location (for example, school, apartment, or church). Thus, an instrument created for one project would probably be inappropriate for another without major revisions. The participants discussed ways to meet their *assessment* and *evaluation* needs and identified ways in which BEO and OBEMLA could provide assistance. The most effective approach seemed to be the development of a handbook on assessment. The seminar and immediate follow-up to it represent the three steps of the preplanning phase of the planning process model. Table 1 illustrates the first three steps of the model and its role in the development of the handbook.

Table 1

Planning Process Model: Preplanning Phase of Handbook Development

Steps in the Planning Process Model	*Developmental Activities*
1 Develop goals	BEO plans FELP seminar
2 Conduct needs assessment	FELP directors identify issues
3 Design objectives	BEO develops idea of handbook, identifies authors

BEO staff held a second meeting of FELP directors in January 1991. This meeting took the form of a focus group, led by two of the authors. The directors and invited guests discussed three specific aspects of a family literacy project:

1. Intake—strategies and formats for assessing learners' levels of literacy and related abilities.
2. Instruction—strategies and formats for assessing learners' progress in meeting the objectives of the project.
3. Evaluation—strategies and formats for assessing the overall goals of the project.

Two themes were repeated throughout the discussion—the need for alternative assessments at all phases of a family literacy project and the need to help project directors improve their projects.

Two themes were repeated throughout the discussion—the need for *alternative assessments* at all phases of a family literacy project and the need to help project directors improve their *projects*.

After the meeting, the outline of the handbook was discussed with OBEMLA personnel and other agencies that might provide assistance. The authors held several subsequent meetings, identified other educators who might participate in the project, and wrote and edited the chapters. Time lines were established for drafting, revising, and publishing the handbook. The field-test version was published in September 1992, with the assistance of the FELP project at Miami's Florida International University. The authors discussed a time line for revisions and the need for a field-test document. This portion of the development of the handbook parallels the planning phase of the model shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Planning Process Model: Planning Phase of Handbook Development

Steps in the Planning Process Model	*Developmental Activities*
4 Develop curriculum and instructional activities	Focus group: FELP project directors, authors, BEO staff
5 Identify obstacles	BEO staff discuss outline of handbook with OBEMLA
6 Identify necessary resources	Meetings with authors
7 Assign responsibility	Writing and editing of chapters
8 Establish time line	Drafts, revisions, publishing

The usage surveys provided both quantitative and qualitative data.

Field-Testing the Handbook

Before the field-testing of the handbook during the 1992–93 academic year, the authors discussed various methods of soliciting comments. Although each option presented advantages and disadvantages, the best option seemed to be a series of short rating scales, one included at the end of each chapter of the volume. Each rating scale or usage survey could be completed as the chapters were read. The usage surveys listed the major topics of each chapter and asked the reader to rate the clarity of the writing and the information provided. In addition, readers were given the option of making other comments and suggestions. This provision offered the possibility of obtaining both quantitative (numeric) and qualitative (reflection) data. The usage survey for Chapter I is shown in Figure 1 on page 134. Table 3 illustrates the field-testing of the handbook and planning for revisions during the evaluation phase of the model.

Table 3

Planning Process Model: Evaluation Phase of Handbook Development

Steps in the Planning Process Model	*Developmental Activities*
9 Specify outcomes	Decide to revise handbook
10 Design instruments and collect data	Create usage surveys
11 Analyze data	Analyze qualitative and quantitative data from usage surveys
12 Formulate conclusions	Identify publisher, revise handbook

Approximately 300 copies of the handbook were disseminated:

- To all FELP projects in the United States that began operations between 1990 and 1992.
- To coordinators of bilingual education programs in California.
- To offices of bilingual education in each of the 50 state departments of education.
- To selected experts in adult literacy, bilingual education, and family literacy.

In general, reviewers rated the handbook as quite beneficial and especially liked the sample assessment instruments.

In addition, presentations on the handbook were made at various national, regional, and state meetings and conferences, such as the national conference of the National Association for Bilingual Education; a national meeting of Family English Literacy programs funded by ESEA Title VII; a meeting of Even Start projects in California; and various meetings of educators interested in the evaluation of language-minority programs.

Results of the surveys. Most of the comments received about the handbook were positive. Some individuals returned the usage surveys, and others sent letters or telephoned with information of a more qualitative nature. In an attempt to obtain focused, critical remarks, a selected group of recipients—primarily FELP directors and experts in adult literacy—were sent letters requesting feedback. In general, reviewers rated the handbook as quite beneficial and especially liked the sample assessment instruments. Others stated that the document would be very useful during the planning stages of a family literacy project.

Some reviewers provided useful criticisms of the handbook. For example, some requested more information about standardized tests and workplace literacy; others thought that the handbook should emphasize strongly that the results of evaluation should be used for improving the project. All the feedback received during the field-test was considered by the authors during the revision process. This chapter is itself an outcome of the field-test, particularly the sections on standardized tests and workplace literacy.

The authors were very interested in having the handbook edited and produced by individuals who were knowledgeable about family literacy and wanted the handbook disseminated widely.

Publication of the Handbook

The authors were very interested in having the handbook edited and produced by individuals who were knowledgeable about family literacy and wanted the handbook disseminated widely. For these reasons they selected the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC, as the publisher.

The process of selecting the publisher provides further illustration of the planning process model. In determining the type of publisher best able to disseminate the handbook, the authors had to reexamine the goals of the handbook. Submitting the manuscript to NCLE constituted a new needs assessment as the authors responded to feedback from

NCLE staff. Table 4 illustrates how completing one planning cycle brought the authors back to the preplanning phase as they "replanned" the handbook.

Table 4

Planning Process Model: The On-going Process (Revisions)

Steps in the Planning Process Model		*Developmental Activities*
1	Preplanning: Develop goals	Authors plan revisions
2	Preplanning: Conduct needs assessment	Find publisher, send Field-Test manuscript
3	Preplanning: Design objectives	Revisions from NCLE and usage survey respondents
4–8	Planning	Authors revise manuscript; add Chapter VI
9–12	Evaluation	Comments from NCLE staff and BEO editors

Revisions to the Handbook Manuscript

The assessments, procedures, evaluation designs, and reporting methods presented in the handbook will be appropriate for literacy projects supported by many funding agencies.

Most of the revisions in the handbook were related to expanding the focus of the volume from the Family English Literacy Program funded by ESEA Title VII to family literacy projects in general. Although the volume still concentrates on programs serving language-minority adults and families, many of the suggestions could also be used in literacy programs for monolingual English speakers. Rather than concentrating on the regulations for one funding source (ESEA Title VII), the handbook now reminds readers that they need to address the concerns of their particular funding agency. The assessments, procedures, evaluation designs, and reporting methods presented in the handbook will be appropriate for literacy projects supported by many funding agencies.

Some reviewers suggested that the authors provide more information about standardized tests and workplace literacy. Because the focus of the volume is alternative assessment and evaluation, the authors did not expand their chapters to include those topics. However, they did believe that readers ought to have more information about the ways in which *standardized assessments* could complement alternative approaches in an overall evaluation design for a literacy project. They also thought it important to provide readers with sources of more information about workplace literacy. The next section of this chapter deals with standardized tests and workplace literacy.

Additions to the Handbook

This section deals with two topics for which readers of the field-test version requested information—standardized tests and workplace literacy. Although they are not major issues in the volume, they are related to the implementation of many family literacy projects. For instance, funding sources usually require a measure of learner progress, implying that the measure should be a standardized test. Although standardized tests probably are not the best measure for adult learners, they do provide certain types of information that instructors might find helpful if interpreted appropriately. Workplace literacy, on the other hand, is a newer field of interest. It is quite possible that those working with adult learners might want to determine what aspects of workplace literacy they might be able to include within their programs and where they can find further information on the topic. This section is designed to meet those very real needs and concerns.

Although standardized tests probably are not the best measure for adult learners, they do provide certain types of information that instructors might find helpful if interpreted appropriately.

Standardized Tests

A standardized test of academic achievement, language proficiency, or affective traits is typically used to determine learners' skills, proficiencies, or strengths within a particular domain. The tests are so named because the administration, format, contents, language, and scoring procedures are the same for all students; that is, they have been standardized. Because of this, all learners theoretically have the same opportunity to demonstrate their level or amount of achievement, proficiency, or affective trait in comparison to a large group of other learners. This second group of learners (norming group) was selected by the test publisher to take the test; they are usually described in the test's technical manual. The norming group should include some individuals who are similar to the students taking the test; for example, they should be similar to the family literacy project's learners in gender, age, race or ethnicity, cultural background, language background, English proficiency, and educational background. Because of these similarities, it is appropriate to compare the results of the two groups. However, problems with standardized tests should be considered before the results are used.

Limitations of standardized tests. Standardized achievement tests have been attacked since 1934 for being biased against many groups of students. The attacks cite cultural, linguistic, and ethnic bias (see DeAvila & Havassy, 1974; Figueroa, 1990; Sánchez, 1934) as well as gender bias (Loewen, Rosser, & Katzman, 1992). Because most standardized achievement tests are administered in English, this problem has special meaning for language-minority students. Figueroa (1990) states that "tests in English degenerate in unknown degrees into tests of English language proficiency" (p. 93). Even though some tests have been translated into other languages, most notably Spanish, DeAvila and Havassy argue that these tests "as they are currently designed are of little use to anybody" (1974, p. 72).

According to Figueroa, "tests in English degenerate in unknown degrees into tests of English language proficiency."

Much of the problem with proficiency tests is associated with the lack of a generally accepted definition of proficiency.

Standardized tests of language proficiency present a different set of problems. First, most proficiency tests being used place a great deal of emphasis on discrete skills, such as grammar and vocabulary. They tend not to measure the more complex constructs (Bachman, 1990; Durán, 1988; Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990). Much of the problem is associated with the lack of a generally accepted definition of proficiency. For example, most proficiency tests still measure only oral production skills—just one part of what is needed for communicating with different people in different settings (Durán, 1988).

Strengths of standardized tests. Standardized tests are commonly used in programs for language-minority learners because they are readily available and relatively inexpensive. In addition, they can be scored by the test publisher (thus releasing teachers from an onerous job) and provide for comparisons among groups. Moreover, they allow for comparisons to be made from one time period to another—if normal curve-equivalent (NCE) scores or scale scores are used.

Berlak explains another reason that standardized measures are commonly used: "Since the turn of the century in North America, psychometricians have laid claim to providing the most, if not the only, **scientifically** valid means of measuring academic achievement" (original emphasis, 1992, p. 194). The *validity* and *reliability* of most standardized tests can be documented readily; many studies have been done by test publishers and others that support the technical merits of the tests. However, the studies generally include only middle-class learners and rarely involve language-minority students or older students. Thus, the principal strengths of standardized tests are their ready availability and capacity to provide comparisons among learners and across time periods.

The principal strengths of standardized tests are their ready availability and capacity to provide comparisons among learners and across time periods.

Appropriate uses of standardized tests. The following are some caveats to keep in mind when considering the use of standardized tests:

1. Select a test that measures at least 40% of the content taught in the program—a condition that can be especially difficult for a family literacy project.
2. Select a test that is sensitive to the cultural, linguistic, and age differences of the learners.
3. Interpret test scores carefully. Because no test is perfect, each score is only an estimate of the learner's true ability.
4. Never use one cut-off score. Create a range or band-width of scores within which further assessment is required. For example, a score below 40% correct indicates that the student needs further learning experiences; 40 to 50%, more assessments are necessary to judge the learner's achievement; and over 50%, the learner can move to a new learning area.
5. Examine carefully the background information about the test to determine the test's relevance for the project (for example, the composition of the norming group and the contents of the test).

6. Compare the test results with the learner's performance in the classroom to ensure that learners with higher scores on the test are those who perform better in class.
7. Be sure to request scale scores or NCEs.
8. Consider the results of supplemental assessments and other information about the learner so that decisions are not based on one standardized test score (Evaluation Assistance Center–West, 1992).

Alternative assessments take place in a contextualized, real-life setting, thereby providing a more performance-based measure of the learner's abilities.

The focus of most of the handbook has been on alternative measures. Such assessments are more appropriate for many learners, especially those in family literacy programs. Alternative assessments take place in a contextualized, real-life setting, thereby providing a performance-based measure of the learner's abilities. Alternative approaches usually afford learners with a greater opportunity to demonstrate their actual abilities. Standardized testing, on the other hand, takes place in a decontextualized, neutral setting, which can work against learners whose test-taking skills are not as well developed. (See Navarrete et al., in press, for a thorough discussion of decontextualized versus contextualized measures.) Standardized tests can, however, be modified to be performance based. Table 5 provides some example test items from standardized multiple-choice tests together with suggestions on how they might be modified to yield meaningful results.

Table 5

Sample Test Items: Multiple Choice and Performance Based

Standardized item	*Performance based item*
What is 3 + 4 ?	The answer is 7. What is the question? *or* Draw a picture that shows 3 + 4.
Find the area of the shape below (a 3 x 5 rectangle is pictured).	Draw a shape with an area of 16 square units.
Look at the table showing how many cars of different makes were sold last year. How many Toyota Celicas were sold?	Look at the table below. What does it tell us about the cars that were sold last year?
Round 23 to the nearest 10.	What numbers round to 20?
Add 56 and 68.	Tucker adds 57 and 68 on his calculator and gets 113. How do you know it's wrong?

Note: Modified from Evaluation Assistance Center–West, 1993.

Finding an appropriate standardized test. By following the caveats described in the previous section, project staff may be able to identify a standardized test that meets the needs of their project. The following are suggested steps for selecting an appropriate standardized test:

1. Review the objectives of the project. If necessary, put them in hierarchical order with the most important objective first and the least important last.
2. Identify four or five potential tests by contacting other family literacy projects, reading evaluation reports or research studies to determine what measures were utilized, contacting technical support agencies, and looking for reviews of tests in professional journals or magazines.
3. Determine the viability of the tests by consulting professional test review sources (for example, *The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook*, edited by Mitchell, 1985, or *Test Critiques*, by Keyser & Sweetland, 1984), to ensure that the test meets the needs of the project and has the appropriate characteristics of reliability and validity. The possibilities should thus be narrowed to two or three tests.
4. Request the technical manual and a review copy of each of the possible tests. Determine whether there is a match between the test objectives and the project objectives and a match between the demographics of the norming group for the test and the learners in the project. One test should now stand out as the best option.
5. Use the test on a group of learners—ideally, learners from two very different skill levels—to ensure that they feel comfortable with the test, that the test can differentiate between learners with different skill levels, and that the scores provide useful information about the learners.
6. If a decision is made to use the test on a regular basis, provide the learners with some training in test-taking skills. This suggestion does not mean teaching to the test but rather helping learners develop such strategies as making good choices among alternative responses, using time wisely, and skipping difficult items.

To find a standardized test:

- **Review the objectives of the project.**
- **Determine the viability of a few tests.**
- **Use one test on a group of learners.**
- **Provide the learners with test taking skills.**

Some of the standardized tests that are typically used in family literacy projects are listed in Table 6. Also provided in the table are brief descriptions of the purpose of the test and the language requirements for test takers. Several books and articles are available that provide more information about such tests (see Jackson, 1990). In addition, some tests of proficiency are available and appropriate for adult students: for example, *Adult Language Assessment Scales (ALAS)* and the *IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT)* (Dalton, 1989, 1992; De Avila & Duncan, 1993).

Table 6

Standardized Tests Commonly Used in Family Literacy Projects

Test	*Purpose*	*Literacy Requirements*
Adult Basic Learning Exam (ABLE)	Reading, writing, math	Grade 2 English
Basic English Skills Test (BEST)	Speaking, listening, reading, writing	Low proficiency, nonnative English
CASAS Adult Life Skills	Reading	Grade 1 English
Adult Language Assessment Scales (A-LAS)	Reading, writing, math, speaking, listening	Grade 2 English
Reading Evaluation Adult Diagnosis (READ)	Reading	Grade 1 English
Spanish Assessment of Basic Skills (SABE)	Reading, math	Grade 1 Spanish
Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)	Reading, writing, math	Grade 2 English
Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)—Spanish	Preliteracy/ literacy skills	Grade 1 Spanish, preliterate Spanish

In summary, as suggested by Navarrete et al. (in press), standardized tests of basic skills and language proficiency can be used if the following conditions are met:

1. They are not the sole measurement of learners' achievements.
2. Scores are interpreted carefully.
3. They match the demographic and educational backgrounds of the learners in the project.
4. The objectives of the test match the objectives of the project, including the curriculum content.

Workplace literacy projects are designed to provide learners with work-related literacy skills, including the communication skills necessary to ask questions, clarify concerns, and solve problems cooperatively through discussion with others.

Workplace Literacy

The purpose of many family literacy projects is to address the literacy needs of adults and children in families in which a language other than English is spoken. The projects have several components, some of which might include native-language literacy, English literacy, cross-cultural development, self-esteem, family learning, and home-school relations. Workplace literacy projects are designed to

provide learners with work-related literacy skills, including the communication skills necessary to ask questions, clarify concerns, and solve problems cooperatively through discussion with others (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1991). Workplace literacy projects may be considered a type of family literacy project, but their goals are more specifically work related.

Current research has identified four types of workplace literacy projects characterized by the following attributes (Gowen, 1992; Kutner, Sherman, Webb, & Fisher, 1991; Wrigley & Guth, 1992):

1. Programs to give prospective workers the language skills they need to enter the work force.
2. Short-term courses in either English or the native language to prepare learners for—or improve their performance on—a specific set of job-related language tasks.
3. Programs that focus the curriculum design on the needs and goals of the learners as well as those of the sponsoring agency.
4. Programs for professionals who have at least basic literacy skills in their native language and who need to improve their English-language abilities.

Workplace literacy programs are essential to the economic and social growth of all learners and employees.

Workplace literacy programs are essential to the economic and social growth of all learners and employees, especially those whose English-language proficiency is not sufficient to allow them to seek employment successfully. Bilingual programs are a growing trend in both short-term courses and the learner-centered programs as effective, efficient approaches to meeting learners' needs. Although this volume does not address workplace literacy, sources of information are available. McGroarty (1993, pp. 102-4) has identified four documents that can be suggested for those who wish to increase their knowledge of workplace literacy:

- Cichón, Grover, and Thomas (1991) provide a comprehensive overview of the types of programs available for teaching language-minority workers.
- Thomas, Bird, and Grover (1992) provide a monograph aimed specifically at community college educators interested in offering vocational training to language-minority learners.
- Thomas, Grover, Cichon, Bird, and Harns (1991) provide a step-by-step guide for program planners considering the establishment of workplace literacy programs.
- Wrigley and Guth (1992) provide a handbook for researchers, program developers, and policymakers that contains definitions of literacy and describes seven approaches to designing a curriculum for adult literacy programs.

Individuals planning workplace literacy programs need to consult a variety of sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding of learners' work-related needs.

This brief overview indicates that individuals planning workplace literacy programs need to consult a variety of sources to obtain a

comprehensive understanding of learners' work-related needs. Readers are encouraged to review the reference section to obtain more in-depth information and assistance.

The planning model is important in the development of curriculum, grant proposals, business plans, and other activities that require effective planning and evaluation.

Summary

It is difficult for one handbook to meet the assessment and evaluation needs of all participants in a wide variety of family literacy projects. This volume has focused on designing and using alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation in order to improve literacy projects. By casting the development of the handbook itself within the schema of the planning process model introduced in Chapter II, this chapter has described the history of the volume and illustrated how a needs-based project can be developed. The planning model is important not only within the context of developing a specific type of literacy project but also in the development of curriculum, grant proposals, business plans, and other activities that require effective planning and evaluation. By illustrating how the model was used to develop this handbook, the authors hope that staff members in family literacy projects will find uses for the model and the handbook to improve their projects.

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Figure 1

Sample Survey of Usage from Field-Test Edition

Chapter I. Introduction to Alternative Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation

This resource guide must be helpful to you, the FELP director or evaluator, in order to be considered a success. In accepting the field-test edition of the guide, we hope that you agree to participate in this usage survey. We plan to revise the guide based on your comments and criticisms; it then will be published for a broader audience. Please share with us your critical comments. After reviewing the chapter, use the scale below to indicate whether the guide is written clearly; the scale indicates that it is

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3. Information that is tangential to my needs, so it won't help a great deal; or
4. Information that I don't need and won't use.

Rate clarity	*Area to be rated*	*Rate information*
1 2 3 4	Format of the chapter	Not applicable
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Not applicable	The general ideas and information presented	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Types of assessments (e.g., alternative, standardized)	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Role of evaluation	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	FELP statute and explanations	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Evaluation issues for FELP projects	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	ESEA Title VII evaluation requirements	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Overview of the guide	1 2 3 4

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Please return your completed survey. You may fold, staple, and stamp this page—the address is on the back side. If you prefer, you may FAX it to Daniel D. Holt, Bilingual Education Office at (916) 657-2928. We also would appreciate receiving a copy of any alternative assessments you create as a result of this guide.

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GLOSSARY

Alternative assessment. A flexible assessment approach that is representative of the curriculum, meaningful to learners, and indicative of the learners' acquired ability or knowledge. Examples are surveys, interviews, observation measures, and performance samples.

Annual evaluation report. Submitted yearly to a funding agency such as the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education, to summarize the accomplishments of a project.

Assessment. The use of instruments and procedures to gather data on a regular basis. Assessment may focus on identifying learners' needs, documenting the learners' progress toward meeting their own goals, and ascertaining the extent to which the project objectives are being met.

Baseline data. Data that are collected before project activities are implemented. For example, baseline data collected on new enrollees may be used for comparison with data obtained from learners at a later point in the project.

Descriptor. An explanation of an individual rating on a scale. For example, on a 0–5 scale for assessing reading, a descriptor for 0 may be **Cannot read instructions** and the descriptor for 5 might be **Reads instructions with ease**.

English as a second language. English acquired by individuals whose native language is a language other than English.

Evaluation. The process of integrating and analyzing assessment data at a given point in time for such purposes as developing and refining goals and objectives; documenting the learners' progress; and determining the overall success of the project.

Family English Literacy Program (FELP). A program authorized in 1984 as part of Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. FELP is defined as "a program of instruction designed to help limited-English-proficient/LEP adults and out-of-school youth achieve competence in the English language. . . . Such programs may include instruction on how parents and family members can facilitate the educational achievement of limited-English-proficient children." [20 USC §3283(a)(7)]

Family literacy project. Consists of a set of inter-related components that address the literacy needs of adults and children. This handbook focuses on families in which a language other than English is spoken. Examples of components are native language literacy, English literacy, cross-cultural development, self-esteem, family learning, and home-school relations.

Final performance report. Submitted to a funding agency such as the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education, to summarize the accomplishments of a project during the entire grant period.

Focus group. A group that is formed for the purpose of providing input. Group members are interviewed according to a protocol that has been previously established.

Frequency count. A technique for tallying information, usually from survey responses. A frequency count may provide information such as how many parents need child care or how often participants visit the library.

Holistic scoring. A strategy for assessing performance by summarizing individual features to obtain an overall view of learners' progress or some other dimension of the project.

Instructional Program. A coordinated set of activities that represent the curriculum and instructional components of a project.

Interview. An alternative assessment approach for obtaining detailed information. An interview may be administered to individuals or to groups with respondents answering orally or in writing. Interviews may be used with focus groups.

Literacy. The ability to use language and language-related strategies, especially those associated with reading and writing, in a variety of settings (family, community, school, work) to achieve one's own goals (personal, professional, academic).

Literacy framework. Staff members' and learners' shared understanding of the learners' literacy needs, program goals, curriculum and methodology, and approaches for assessing and evaluating literacy development. The elements of the framework should be coordinated so that they are interdependent and mutually supportive.

Literacy practices. The ways individuals use literacy in their daily lives.

Modified cohort design. A method of analyzing data by comparing the performance of project participants with comparable individuals who have not yet benefited from project services.

Norm-referenced assessment. See Standardized assessment.

Objective. A description of an outcome or change that is expected as a result of implementing a project. The content of objectives is determined by what the learners need, what the staff are prepared to teach, and what is possible to achieve within the time and budget constraints of the project.

Observation measure. An alternative assessment instrument for obtaining various kinds of information. Observations may focus on such features as learners' characteristics, group interactions, or language and literacy performance.

Performance sample. An example of a learner's work in selected tasks. Performance samples include writing samples, oral readings, role plays, and oral presentations.

Portfolio. A collection of examples of a learner's accomplishments such as reading logs, language experience stories, and writing samples. The contents of the portfolio can be used to show a learner's progress over time.

Project. Refers to all components to be implemented, including those described in the instructional program.

Protocol. A specified set of procedures and questions designed to achieve the purposes of an assessment activity.

Rating scale. A technique for assessing an area of interest (for example, reading ability or self-confidence) on a scale of intervals usually designated by numbers or descriptors.

Reliability. Refers to the capacity of an assessment instrument or procedure to produce approximately the same results consistently on different occasions when the conditions of the assessment remain the same. For example, will the instrument provide the same results if learners are tested on Thursday instead of Wednesday, or if two or more competent judges scored the test independently?

Standardized assessment. An instrument that is created to allow for comparisons between individuals' current achievement and the average performance (norms) of selected participants (norming group). An example is the *Basic English Skills Test (BEST),* available from the Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC. In this volume, the terms standardized assessment and norm-referenced assessment are used interchangeably.

Survey. An alternative assessment approach for obtaining information. A survey may be administered to individuals or groups with respondents answering orally or in writing.

Validity. Refers to the capacity of an assessment instrument or procedure to measure what it claims to measure. For example, does the reading test actually measure reading comprehension, or does success on the test also depend on the learners' knowledge of U.S. culture?

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Daniel D. Holt, Ed.

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